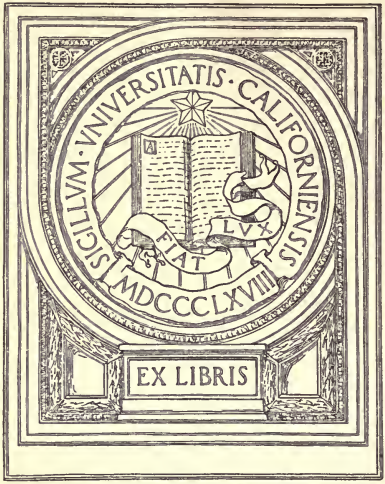
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
AT LOS ANGELES




ROBERT ERNEST COWAN

# THE WHITE CHIEF

## A Legend of Northern Mexico.

BY

CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF

"RIFLE-RANGERS," "SCALP-HUNTERS," ETC. ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

DAVID BOGUE, FLEET STREET,

1855.

*(Right of Translation reserved by the Author.)*

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES LIBRARY

LONDON:
Printed by G. BARCLAY, Castle Street, Leicester Sq.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
LIBRARY

PR
5219
R26W
v. 2

# THE WHITE CHIEF.

## CHAPTER I.

For some minutes Carlos remained stupefied with the shock, and made no effort to rouse himself.

A friendly hand, laid upon his shoulder, caused him to look up. Don Juan the ranchero was bending over him.

Don Juan's face wore a look as wretched as his own. It gave him no hope; and it was almost mechanically the words escaped his lips,—



256730

"My mother? my sister?"

"Your mother is at my house," replied Don Juan.

"And Rosita?"

Don Juan made no reply—the tears were rolling down his cheeks.

"Come, man!" said Carlos, seeing the other in as much need of consolation as himself; "out with it—let me know the worst! Is she dead?"

"No,—no,—no!—I hope not *dead!*

"Carried off?"

"Alas, yes!"

"By whom?"

"The Indians."

"You are sure by *Indians?*"

As Carlos asked this question, a look of strange meaning glanced from his eyes.

"Quite sure. I saw them myself—your mother——"

"My mother! What of her?"

"She is safe. She met the savages in the doorway, was knocked senseless by a blow, and saw no more."

"But Rosita?"

"No one saw her; but certainly she was taken away by the Indians."

"You are sure they were *Indians*, Don Juan?"

"Sure of it. They attacked my house almost at the same time. They had previously driven off my cattle, and for that, one of my people was on the look-out. He saw them approach; and, before they got near, we were shut up and ready to defend ourselves. Finding this, they soon went off. Fearing for your people, I stole out as soon as they were gone, and came here. When I arrived the roof was blazing, and your mother lying

senseless in the doorway. Rosita was gone! *Madre de dios!* she was gone!"

And the young ranchero wept afresh.

"Don Juan!" said Carlos, in a firm voice; "you have been a friend—a brother—to me and mine. I know you suffer as much as I do. Let there be no tears! See! mine are dried up! I weep no more—perhaps sleep not, till Rosita is rescued or revenged. Let us to business, then! Tell me all that is known about these Indians—and quick, Don Juan! I have a keen appetite for your news!"

The ranchero detailed the various rumours that had been afloat for the three or four days preceding—as well as the actual occurrences,—how the Indians had been first seen upon the upper plain; their encounter with the shepherds and the driving off of the sheep; their

appearance in the valley, and their raid upon his own cattle—for it was his *ganaderia* that had suffered—and then the after circumstances already known to Carlos.

He also informed the latter of the activity shown by the troops; how they had followed that morning upon the trail of the robbers; how he had desired to accompany them with some of his people; and how the request was refused by the Commandante.

"Refused?" exclaimed Carlos, interrogatively.

"Yes," replied Don Juan; "he said we would only hinder the troops! I fancy his motive was his chagrin with me. He does not like me ever since the fiesta."

"Well! what then?"

"The troops returned but an hour ago. They report that they followed the trail as far as the Pecos, where it crossed, striking

direct for the Llano Estacado; and, as the Indians had evidently gone off to the great plains, it would have been useless to attempt pursuing them farther. So they alleged.

"The people," continued Don Juan, "will be only too glad that the savages have gone away, and will trouble themselves no farther about it. I have been trying to get up a party to follow them, but not one would venture. Hopeless as it was, I intended a pursuit with my own people; but, thank God! *you* have come!"

"Ay, pray God it may not be too late to follow their trail. But no; only last night at midnight, you say? There's been neither rain nor high wind—it will be fresh as dew; and if ever hound —— Ha! where's Cibolo?"

"At my house the dog is. He was lost this morning; we thought he had been

killed or carried off; but, at midday, my people found him by the rancho here, covered with mud, and bleeding where he had received the prick of a spear. We think the Indians must have taken him along, and that he escaped from them on the road."

"It is strange enough—Oh! my poor Rosita!—poor lost sister!—where art thou at this moment?—where?—where?—Shall I ever see you again?—My God! my God!"

And Carlos once more sunk back into his attitude of despair.

Then suddenly springing to his feet, with clenched fist and flashing eyes, he cried out,—

"Wide though the prairie plains, and faint the trail of these dastardly robbers, yet keen is the eye of Carlos the cibolero! I shall find thee yet—I shall find thee, though it cost me the search of a life. Fear not, Rosita! fear not, sweet sister! I come to

your rescue! If thou art wronged, woe, woe, to the tribe that has done it!" Then turning to Don Juan, he continued,—"The night is on—we can do nothing to-night. Don Juan!—friend, brother!—bring me to her—to my mother."

There is a wild poetry in the language of grief, and there was poetry in the words of the cibolero; but these bursts of poetic utterance were brief, and he again returned to the serious reality of his situation. Every circumstance that could aid him in his purposed pursuit was considered and arranged in a sober and practical manner. His arms and accoutrements, his horse, all were cared for, so as to be ready by the earliest hour of light. His servants, and those of Don Juan, were to accompany him, and for these horses were also prepared.

Pack-mules, too, with provisions and other

necessaries for a long journey—for Carlos had no intention of returning without the accomplishment of his sworn purpose—rescue or revenge. His was no pursuit to be baffled by slight obstacles. He was not going to bring back the report "*no los pudimos alcanzar.*" He was resolved to trail the robbers to the farthest point of the prairies—to follow them to their fastness, wherever that might be.

Don Juan was with him heart and soul, for the ranchero's interest in the result was equal to his own—his agony was the same.

Their peons numbered a score—trusty Tagnos all, who loved their masters, and who, if not warriors by trade, were made so by sympathy and zeal.

Should they overtake the robbers in time, there would be no fear of the result. From all circumstances known, the latter formed

but a weak band. Had this not been the case, they would never have left the valley with so trifling a booty. Could they be overtaken before joining their tribe, all might yet be well. They would be compelled to give up both their plunder and their captive, and, perhaps, pay dearly for the distress they had occasioned. Time, therefore, was a most important consideration, and the pursuers had resolved to take the trail with the earliest light of the morning.

Carlos slept not — and Don Juan only in short and feverish intervals. Both sat up in their dresses,— Carlos by the bedside of his mother, who, still suffering from the effects of the blow, appeared to rave in her sleep.

The cibolero sat silent, and in deep thought. He was busied with plans and conjectures—conjectures as to what tribe of Indians the marauders could belong. Apaches

or Comanches they were not. He had met parties of both on his return. They treated him in a friendly manner, and they said nothing of hostilities against the people of San Ildefonso. Besides no bands of these would have been in such small force as the late robbers evidently were. Carlos wished it had been they. He knew that in such a case, when it was known that the captive was *his* sister, she would be restored to him. But no; they had nothing to do with it. Who then?—the Yutas? Such was the belief among the people of the valley, as he had been told by Don Juan. If so, there was still a hope—Carlos had traded with a branch of this powerful and warlike tribe. He was also on friendly terms with some of its chiefs, though these were now at war with the more northern settlements.

But the Jicarillas still returned to his

mind. These were Indians of a cowardly, brutal disposition, and his mortal foes. They would have scalped him on sight. If his sister was *their* captive, her lot was hard indeed; and the very thought of such a fate caused the cibolero to start up with a shudder, and clench his hands in a convulsive effort of passion.

* * * *

It was near morning. The peons were astir and armed. The horses and mules were saddled in the patio, and Don Juan had announced that all were ready. Carlos stood by the bedside of his mother to take leave. She beckoned him near. She was still weak, for blood had flown freely from her, and her voice was low and feeble.

"My son," said she, as Carlos bent over her, "know you what Indians you are going to pursue?"

"No, mother," replied Carlos, "but I fear they are our enemies the Jicarillas."

"Have the Jicarillas *beards on their faces and jewels on their fingers?*"

"No, mother; why do you ask such a question?—you know they have no beards! My poor mother!" added he, turning to Don Juan, "this terrible stroke has taken her senses!"

"Follow the trail, then!" she continued, without noticing the last remark uttered by Carlos in a whisper; "follow the trail—perhaps it will guide thee to ——" and she whispered the rest into his ear.

"What, mother?" said he, starting as if at some strange information. "Dost thou think so?"

"I have some suspicion—only *suspicion*—but follow the trail—it will guide thee—follow it, and be satisfied!"

"Do not doubt me, mother; I shall be satisfied of *that*."

"One promise before you go. Be not rash—be prudent."

"Fear not, mother! I will."

"If it be so ——

"If it be so, mother, you'll soon see me back—God bless you!—My blood's on fire—I cannot stay!—God bless you, mother! —Farewell!"

Next minute the train of mounted men, with Don Juan and Carlos at its head, passed out of the great gate, and took the road that led out from the valley.

## CHAPTER II.

It was not yet daybreak when the party left the house, but they had not started too early. Carlos knew that they could follow the road so far as the lancers had gone, in the darkness; and it would be light enough, by the time they had got to the point where these had turned back.

Five miles below the house of Don Juan the road forked—one leading southward, was that by which Carlos had returned the evening before; the other, or left fork, led nearly in a direct line towards the Pecos, where there was a ford. The left fork had been that

taken by the troopers, as their horse-tracks showed.

It was now day. They could have followed the trail at a gallop, as it was a much travelled and well-known path. But the eye of the cibolero was not bent upon this plain trail, but upon the ground on each side of it, and this double scrutiny caused him to ride more slowly.

On both sides were cattle-tracks. These were, no doubt, made by the cattle stolen from Don Juan—in all numbering about fifty. The cibolero said they must have passed over the ground two days before. That would correspond with the time when they had been taken.

The trackers soon passed the limits of the valley, and entered the plain through which runs the Pecos. They were about approaching that stream in a direct line, and were still two miles from its banks, when the dog Cibolo,

who had been trotting in advance of the party, suddenly turned to the left, and ran on in that direction! The keen eye of Carlos detected a new trail upon which the dog was running, and which parted from the track of the troopers. It ran in a direction due north.

What appeared singular both to Carlos and Don Juan was the fact of Cibolo having taken this new route, as it was not marked by a road or path of any kind, but merely by the footprints of some animals that had lately passed over it!

*Had Cibolo gone that way before?*

Carlos dismounted to examine the tracks.

"Four horses and one mule!" he said, speaking to Don Juan. "Two of the horses shod on the fore feet only; the other two, with the mule, barefoot. All of them mounted —the mule led,—perhaps with a pack. No!"

he added, after a little further examination, "it's not a pack-mule!"

It scarce cost the cibolero five minutes to arrive at these conclusions. How he did so was a mystery to most of his companions,—perhaps to all, except the half-blood, Antonio. And yet he was right in every particular.

He continued to scrutinise the new trail for some moments longer.

"The time corresponds," said he, still addressing Don Juan. "They passed yesterday morning before the dew was dry. You are sure it was not midnight when they left your house?"

"Quite sure," replied the ranchero. "It was still only midnight when I returned with your mother from the rancho. I am quite sure of that."

"One more question, Don Juan: How many Indians, think you, were in the party

that made their appearance at your house—few or many?"

"Not many, I think. Two or three only could be heard yelling at once; but the trees prevented us from seeing them. I fancy, from their traces left, that the band was a very small one. It might be the same that burned the rancho. They could have arrived at my house afterwards. There was time enough."

"I have reason to believe they *were* the same," said Carlos, still bending over the hoof-prints, "and *this may be their trail.*"

"Think you so?" inquired Don Juan.

"I do.—See—there! Is this not strange?"

The speaker pointed to the dog, who, meanwhile, had returned to the spot, and stood whimpering, and showing an evident desire to proceed by the trace newly discovered!

"Very strange," replied Don Juan. "He must have travelled it before!"

"Perhaps so," said Carlos. "But it will not spoil by an hour's keeping. Let us first see where these valiant troopers have been to. I want to know that before I leave this main path. Let us on, and briskly!"

All spurred their animals into a gentle gallop, the cibolero leading as before. As before, also, his eyes swept the ground on both sides in search of any trail that might diverge from that on which they travelled.

Now and then cross-paths appeared, but these were old. No horses had passed recently upon them, and he did not slacken his pace to examine them.

After a twenty minutes' gallop, the party halted upon the bank of the Pecos, at the ford. It was plain that the troopers had also halted

there, and turned back without crossing! But cattle had crossed two days before — so said the cibolero — and mounted drivers. The tracks of both were visible in the mud.

Carlos rode through the shallow water to examine the other side. At a glance he saw that no troops had crossed, but some forty or fifty head of cattle.

After a long and careful examination, not only of the muddy bank but of the plain above, he beckoned to Don Juan and the rest to ford the stream and join him.

When Don Juan came up, the cibolero said to him, in a tone full of intelligence,—

"*Amigo!* you stand a fair chance to recover your cattle."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because their drivers, four in number, have been near this spot not much over

twenty-four hours ago. The animals, therefore, cannot be far off."

"But how know you this?"

"Oh! that is plain enough," coolly responded the cibolero. "The men who drove your beasts were mounted on the same horses that made yonder trail."

The speaker indicated the trail which he had halted to examine, and continued,—"Very probably we'll find the herd among the spurs of the ceja yonder."

As Carlos said this, he pointed to a number of ragged ridges that from the brow of the Llano Estacado jutted out into the plain. They appeared to be at the distance of some ten miles from the crossing.

"Shall we push on there?" asked Don Juan.

The cibolero did not give an immediate

answer. He had evidently not decided yet, and was debating in his own mind what course to pursue.

"Yes," he replied, at length, in a solemn and deliberate voice. "It is better to be sure. With all my terrible suspicions, I may be wrong. *She* may be wrong. *The two trails may yet come together.*"

The latter part of this was spoken in soliloquy, and though it reached the ears of Don Juan, he did not comprehend its meaning. He was about to ask his companion for an explanation, when the latter, suddenly collecting his energies, struck the spurs into his horse, and calling to them to follow, galloped off upon the cattle-track.

After a run of ten miles, which was made in less than an hour, the party entered a large ravine or point of the plain that protruded, like a deep bay, into the mountain-like side

of the high steppe. As they entered this, a singular spectacle came under their eyes. The ravine, near its bottom, was covered with zopilotes, or black vultures. Hundreds of them were perched upon the rocks, or wheeling overhead in the air; and hundreds of others hopped about upon the plain, flapping their broad wings as if in full enjoyment. The coyoté, the larger wolf, and the grizzly bear, were seen moving over the ground, or quarrelling with each other, though they need not have quarrelled—the repast was plenteous for all. Between forty and fifty carcasses were strewed over the ground, which Don Juan and his vaqueros as they drew near recognised as the carcasses of his own cattle!

"I told you so, Don Juan," said Carlos, in a voice now husky with emotion; "but I did not expect this. What a deep-laid plan! They might have strayed back! and that——

oh! horrible villain! My mother was right —*it is he! it is he!*"

"Who, Carlos? What mean you?" inquired Don Juan, wondering at these strange and incongruous phrases.

"Ask me not now, Don Juan! Presently I shall tell you all — presently, but not now; my brain's too hot — my heart is burning: presently—presently. The mystery is past— I know all — I had suspicion from the first —I saw him at the fiesta — I saw his bad ruffian gaze bent upon her. Oh, despot! I'll tear your heart out! Come, Don Juan!— Antonio — comrades!—After me on the trail! It's easily followed. *I know where it will lead* — well I know.—On!"

And driving the spur into the flanks of his horse, the cibolero galloped off in the direction of the crossing.

The wondering troop — Don Juan among

the rest — set their animals in motion, and galloped after.

There was no halt made at the ford. Carlos dashed his horse through the water, and the rest imitated his example. There was no halt either on arriving at the trace that led northward. The dog scampered along it, yelping at intervals; and the troop kept close after his heels.

They had not followed it quite a mile, when it suddenly turned at right angles, and *took the direction of the town!*

Don Juan and the rest expressed surprise, but there was nothing in all this to surprise the cibolero. *He* was expecting that. The expression on his face was not that of astonishment. It was far different — far more terrible to behold!

His eyes were sunk in their sockets and gleaming with a lurid light, as if fire was

burning within them. His teeth were firmly set — his lips white and tightly drawn, as if he was meditating, or had already made, some desperate resolve. He scarce looked at the tracks, he needed their guidance no longer. *He knew where he was going!*

The trail crossed a muddy arroyo. The dog sweltered through, and the red clay adhered to his shaggy coat. It corresponded with that with which he had been already besmeared!

Don Juan noticed the circumstance, and pointed it out.

"He has been here before!" said he.

"I know it," replied Carlos, "I know it all—all. There is no mystery now. Patience, amigo! You shall know all, but now let *me think*. I have no time for aught else."

The trail still led in the direction of the town. It did not re-enter the valley, but

passed over a sloping country to the upper plain, and then ran nearly parallel with the bluffs.

"Master!" said Antonio, riding up by the side of Carlos. "These are not the tracks of Indian horses, unless they have stolen them. Two of them are *troop* horses. I know the *herradura* well. They are *officers' horses*, too —I can tell that from the shoeing."

The cibolero showed no signs of being astonished by this information, nor made he reply. He seemed engrossed with his thoughts.

Antonio, thinking he had not been heard or understood, repeated what he had said.

"Good Antonio!" said the cibolero, turning his eyes on his follower, "do you think me blind or stupid?"

This was not said angrily. Antonio understood its meaning, and fell back among his companions.

On moved the trackers — now at a gallop, now more slowly, for their animals were by this time somewhat jaded. On they moved, still keeping the trail, and still heading straight for the town!

At length they reached a point, where a road from the upper plain led by a zig-zag path to the valley below. It was the same by which Carlos had ascended to perform his great feat on the day of the fiesta. At the top of the descent, Carlos ordered the party to halt, and with Don Juan rode forward to the edge of the projecting cliff — at the very spot where he had exhibited his skill — the cliff of *Niña Perdida.*

Both drew up, when near the edge. They commanded a full view of the valley and the town.

"Do you see that building?" inquired the

cibolero, pointing to the detached pile which lay between them and the town.

"The Presidio?"

"The Presidio."

"Yes—what of it?"

"*She is there!*"

## CHAPTER III.

At that moment upon the *azotea* a man was pacing to and fro. He was not a sentinel, though at opposite angles of the building two of these could be seen who carried carbines—their heads and shoulders just appearing above the crenated top of the battlement towers.

The man *en promenade* was an officer, and the part of the azotea upon which he moved was the roof of the officers' quarter, separated from the rest by a wall of equal height with the parapet. It was, moreover, a sacred precinct—not to be disturbed by the tread of common troopers on ordinary occasions. It was the "quarterdeck" of the Presidio.

The officer was in full dress, though not on any duty; but a single glance at the style and cut of his uniform would convince any one that he was a "dandy soldier," and loved to appear at all times in fine feathers. The gold lace and bright-coloured broad-cloth seemed to affect him, as his rich plumage does the peacock. Every now and again he paused in his promenade, glanced down at his lacquered boots, examined the tournure of his limbs, or feasted his eyes upon the jewels that studded his delicate white fingers.

He was no beauty withal nor hero either; but that did not prevent him from indulging in the fancy that he was both—a combination of Mars and Apollo.

He was a colonel in the Spanish army, however, and Commandante of the Presidio—for the promenader in question was Vizcarra himself.

Though satisfied with his own appearance, he was evidently *not* satisfied about something else. There was a cloud upon his features that not even the contemplation of the lacquered boots or lily-white hands could banish. Some disagreeable thought was pressing upon his mind, causing him at intervals to make fitful starts, and look nervously around him.

"Bah! 'twas but a dream!" he muttered to himself. "Why should I think of it? 'twas only a dream!"

His eyes were bent downward as he gave expression to these abrupt phrases, and as he raised them again chance guided his look in the direction of "La Niña Perdida." No, it was not chance, for La Niña had figured in his dream, and his eyes were but following his thoughts.

The moment they rested on the cliff, he started back as if some terrible spectre were

before him, and mechanically caught hold of the parapet. His cheeks suddenly blanched, his jaws fell, and his chest heaved in hurried and convulsive breathing!

What can cause these symptoms of strong emotion? Is it the sight of yonder horseman standing upon the very pinnacle of the bluff, and outlined against the pale sky? What is there in such an appearance to terrify the Commandante — for terrified he is? Hear him!

"My God! my God!—it is *he!* The form of his horse—of himself—just as he appeared —it is he! I fear to look at him! I cannot——"

And the officer averted his face for a moment, covering it with his hands.

It was but a moment, and again he looked upwards. Not curiosity, but the fascination of fear, caused him to look again. The horseman

had disappeared. Neither horse nor man—no object of any sort, broke the line of the bluffs!

"Surely I have been dreaming again?" muttered the still trembling caitiff. "Surely I have? There was no one there, least of all —— How could he? He is hundreds of miles off! It was an illusion! Ha! ha! ha! What the devil is the matter with my senses, I wonder! That horrid dream of last night has bewitched them! *Carrambo!* I'll think no more of it?"

As he said this he resumed his pace more briskly, believing that that might rid him of his unpleasant reflections. At every turn, however, his eyes again sought the bluff, and swept along its edge with a glance that betokened fear. But they saw no more of the spectre horseman, and their owner began to feel at ease again.

A footstep was heard upon the stone steps of the "escalera." Some one was ascending to the roof.

The next moment the head and shoulders of a man were visible; and Captain Roblado stepped out upon the azotea.

The "buenas dios" that passed between him and Vizcarra showed that it was their first meeting for that day. In fact, neither had been long up; for the hour was not yet too late for fashionable sleepers. Roblado had just breakfasted, and come out on the azotea to enjoy his Havannah.

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed he, as he lighted the cigar; "what a droll masquerade it has been! 'Pon my soul! I can scarce get the paint off; and my voice, after such yelling, won't recover for a week! Ha! ha! Never was maiden wooed and won in such a romantic, roundabout way. Shepherds at-

tacked—sheep driven off, and scattered to the winds — cattle carried away and killed in regular *battue*—old woman knocked over, and rancho given to the flames — besides three days of marching and countermarching, travestieing Indian, and whooping till one is hoarse; and all this trouble for a poor *paisana* —daughter of a reputed witch! Ha! ha! ha! It would read like a chapter in some Eastern romance — Aladdin, for instance — only that the maiden was not rescued by some process of magic or knight-errantry. Ha! ha! ha!"

This speech of Roblado will disclose what is, perhaps, guessed at already—that the late incursion of "los barbaros" was neither more nor less than an affair got up by Vizcarra and himself to cover the abduction of the cibolero's sister. The Indians who had harried the sheep and cattle—who had attacked the hacienda of Don Juan — who had fired the

256230

rancho and carried off Rosita—were Colonel Vizcarra, his officer Captain Roblado, his sergeant Gomez, and a soldier named José—another minion of his confidence and will.

There were but the four, as that number was deemed sufficient for the accomplishment of the atrocious deed; and rumour, backed by fear, gave them the strength of four hundred. Besides, the fewer in the secret the better. This was the prudence or cunning of Roblado.

Most cunningly, too, had they taken their measures. The game, from beginning to end, was played with design and execution worthy of a better cause. The shepherds were first attacked on the upper plain, to give certainty to the report that hostile Indians were near. The scouting-parties were sent out from the Presidio, and proclamations issued to the inhabitants to be on their guard—all for

effect; and the further swoop upon the cattle was clear proof of the presence of "los barbaros" in the valley. In this foray the fiendish masquers took an opportunity of "killing two birds with one stone;" for, in addition to carrying out their general design, they gratified the mean revenge which they held against the young ranchero.

Their slaughtering his cattle in the ravine had a double object. First, the loss it would be to him gave them satisfaction; but their principal motive was that the animals might not stray back to the settlement. Had they done so, after having been captured by Indians, it would have looked suspicious. As it was, they hoped that, long before any one should discover the *battue*, the wolves and buzzards would do their work; and the bones would only supply food for conjecture. This was the more probable, as it was not likely,

while the Indian alarm lasted, that any one would be bold enough to venture that way. There was no settlement or road, except Indian trails, leading in that direction.

Even when the final step was taken, and the victim carried off, she was not brought *directly* to the Presidio; for even *she* was to be hoodwinked. On the contrary, she was tied upon a mule, led by one of the ruffians, and permitted to see the way they were going, until they had reached the point where their trail turned back. She was then blinded by a leathern "tapado," and in that state carried to the Presidio, and within its walls—utterly ignorant of the distance she had travelled, and the place where she was finally permitted to rest.

Every act in the diabolical drama was conceived with astuteness, and enacted with a precision which must do credit to the head of

Captain Roblado, if not to his heart. He was the principal actor in the whole affair.

Vizcarra had, at first, some scruples about the affair—not on the score of conscience, but of impracticability and fear of detection. This would indeed have done him a serious injury. The discovery of such a villanous scheme would have spread like wildfire over the whole country. It would have been ruin to him.

Roblado's eloquence, combined with his own vile desires, overruled the slight opposition of his superior; and, once entered on the affair, the latter found himself highly amused in carrying it out. The burlesque proclamations, the exaggerated stories of Indians, the terror of the citizens, their encomiums on his own energetic and valorous conduct—all these were a pleasant relief to the *ennui* of a barrack life; and, during the several days' visit of

"los barbaros," the Commandante and his Captain were never without a theme for mirth and laughter.

So adroitly had they managed the whole matter that, upon the morning after the final *coup* of the robbers—the abduction of Rosita —there was not a soul in the settlement, themselves and their two aids excepted, that had the slightest suspicion but that real hostile Indians were the actors!

Yes, there was one other who had a suspicion—only a suspicion—Rosita's mother. Even the girl believed herself in the hands of Indians—*if belief she had!*

## CHAPTER IV.

"Ha! ha! ha! A capital joke, by my honour!" continued Roblado, laughing as he puffed his cigar. "It 's the only piece of fun I 've enjoyed since we came to this stupid place. Even in a frontier post I find that one *may* have a little amusement if he know how to make it. Ha! ha! ha! After all, there was a devilish deal of trouble. But come, tell me, my dear Commandante—for you know by this time—in confidence, was it worth the trouble?"

"I am sorry we have taken it," was the reply, delivered in a serious tone.

Roblado looked up in the other's face, and

now, for the first time, noticed its gloomy expression. Busied with his cigar, he had not observed this before.

"Hola!" exclaimed he; "what's the matter, my Colonel? This is not the look a man should wear who has spent the last twelve hours as pleasantly as you must have done. Something amiss?"

"Everything amiss."

"Pray what? Surely you were with her?"

"But a moment, and that was enough."

"Explain, my dear Colonel."

"She is mad!"

"Mad!"

"Raving mad! Her talk terrified me. I was but too glad to come away, and leave her to the care of José, who waits upon her. I could not bear to listen to her strange jabberings. I assure you, camarado, it robbed me of all desire to remain."

"Oh," said Roblado, "that's nothing—she'll get over it in a day or so. She still thinks herself in the hands of the savages who are going to murder and scalp her! It may be as well for you to undeceive her of this, as soon as she comes to her senses. I don't see any harm in letting *her* know. You must do so in the end, and the sooner the better—you will have the longer time to get her reconciled to it. Now that you have her snug within earless and eyeless walls, you can manage the thing at your leisure. No one suspects—no one *can* suspect. They are full of the Indians to-day—ha! ha! ha! and 't is said her inamorato, Don Juan, talks of getting up a party to pursue them! Ha! ha! He'll not do that—the fellow hasn't influence enough, and nobody cares either about his cattle or the witch's daughter. Had it been some one else, the case might have been different. As it is,

there's no fear of discovery. Even were the cibolero himself to make his appearance ——"

"Roblado!" cried the Commandante, interrupting him, and speaking in a deep earnest voice.

"Well?" inquired the Captain, regarding Vizcarra with astonishment.

"I have had a dream—a fearful dream; and that—not the ravings of the girl—it is that is now troubling me. *Diablos!* a fearful dream!"

"You, Commandante—a valiant soldier—to let a silly dream trouble you! But come! what was it? I'm a good interpreter of dreams. I warrant I read it to your better satisfaction."

"Simple enough it is, then. I thought myself upon the cliff of La Niña. I thought that I was alone with Carlos the cibolero! I thought that he knew all, and that he had

brought me there to punish me—to avenge *her*. I had no power to resist, but was led forward to the brink. I thought that we closed, and struggled for a while; but at length I was shaken from his grasp, and pushed over the precipice! I felt myself falling—falling! I could see above me the cibolero, with his sister by his side, and on the extremest point the hideous witch, their mother, who laughed a wild, maniac laugh, and clapped her long, bony hands! I felt myself falling—falling—yet still not reaching the ground; and this horrible feeling continued for a long, long time—in fact, until the fearful thought awoke me. Even then I could scarce believe I had been dreaming, so palpable was the impression that remained. Oh comrade, it was a dreadful dream!"

"And *but* a dream; and what signifies ——?"

"Stay, Roblado! I have not told you all. Within the hour—ay, within the quarter of that time—while I was on this spot thinking over it, I chanced to look up to the cliff; and yonder, upon the extreme point, was a horseman clearly outlined against the sky—and that horseman the very image of the cibolero! I noted the horse and the seat of the rider, which I well remember. I could not trust my eyes to look at him. I averted them for a moment—only a moment; and, when I looked again, he was gone! So quickly had he retired, that I was inclined to think it was only a fancy—that there had been none—and that my dream had produced the illusion!"

"That is likely enough," said Roblado, desirous of comforting his companion; "likely enough—nothing more natural. In the first place, from where we stand to the top of La Niña is a good five thousand varas as the

crow flies; and for you, at that distance, to distinguish Carlos the cibolero from any other horseman, is a plain impossibility. In the second place, Carlos the cibolero is at this moment full five hundred miles from the tip of my cigar, risking his precious carcass for a cartload of stinking hides and a few bultos of dried buffalo-beef. Let us hope that some of his copper-coloured friends will raise his hay-coloured hair, which some of our poblanas so much admire. And now, my dear Commandante, as to your dream, that is as natural as may be. It could hardly be otherwise than that you should have such a dream. The remembrance of the cibolero's feat of horsemanship on that very cliff, and the later affair with the sister, together with the suspicion you may naturally entertain that Señor Carlos wouldn't be too kind to you if he knew all and had you in his power—all

these things being in your thoughts at one time, must come together incongruously in a dream. The old woman, too—if she wasn't in your thoughts she has been in mine, ever since I gave her that knock in the doorway. Who could forget such a picture as she then presented? Ha! ha! ha!"

The brutal villain laughed—not so much from any ludicrous recollection, as to make the whole thing appear light and trivial in the eyes of his companion.

"What does it all amount to?" he continued. "A dream! a simple, everyday dream! Come, my dear friend! don't let it remain on your mind for another instant!"

"I cannot help it, Roblado. It clings to me like my shadow. It feels like a presentiment. I wish I had left this paisana in her mud hut. By heaven! I wish she were back there. I shall not be myself till I have got

rid of her. I seem to loathe, as much as I loved the jabbering idiot."

"Tut, tut, man! you'll soon change your way of thinking—you'll soon take a fresh liking ——"

"No, Roblado, no! I'm disgusted—I can't tell why; but I *am*. Would to God she were off my hands!"

"Oh! that's easy enough, and without hurting anybody. She can go the way she came. It will only be another scene in the masquerade, and no one will be the wiser. If you are really in earnest ——"

"Roblado!" cried the Commandante, grasping his Captain by the arm, "I never was more in earnest in my life. Tell me the plan to get her back without making a noise about it. Tell me quick, for I cannot bear this horrid feeling any longer."

"Why, then," began Roblado, "we

must have another travestie of Indians—we must ——"

He was suddenly interrupted. A short, sharp groan escaped from Vizcarra. His eyes looked as though about to start from his head. His lips grew white, and the perspiration leaped into drops on his forehead!

What could it mean? Vizcarra stood by the outer edge of the azotea, that commanded a view of the road leading up to the gate of the Presidio. He was gazing over the parapet, and pointing with outstretched arm.

Roblado was farther back, near the centre of the azotea. He sprang forward, and looked in the direction indicated. A horseman, covered with sweat and dust, was galloping up the road. He was near enough for Roblado to distinguish his features. Vizcarra had already distinguished them. It was Carlos the cibolero!

## CHAPTER V.

THE announcement made by the cibolero on the bluff startled Don Juan, as if a shot had passed through him. Up to this time the simple ranchero had no thought but that they were on the trail of Indians. Even the singular fact of the trail leading back to the valley had not undeceived him. He supposed the Indians had made some other and later foray in that quarter, and that they would hear of them as soon as they should descend the cliffs.

When Carlos pointed to the Presidio, and said, "She is there!" he received the an-

nouncement at first with surprise, then with incredulity.

Another word from the cibolero, and a few moments' reflection, and his incredulity vanished. The terrible truth flashed upon his mind, for he, too, remembered the conduct of Vizcarra on the day of the fiesta. His visit to the rancho, and other circumstances now rushed before him, aiding the conviction that Carlos spoke the truth.

For some moments the lover could scarce give utterance to his thoughts, so painful were they. More painful than ever! Even while under the belief that his mistress was in the hands of wild Indians he suffered less. There was still some hope, that, by their strange code in relation to female captives, she might escape that dreaded fate, until he and Carlos might come up and rescue her. But now the time that had elapsed — Vizcarra's character —

O God! it was a terrible thought; and the young man reeled in his saddle as it crossed his mind.

He rode back a few paces, flung himself from his horse, and staggered to the ground in the bitterness of his anguish.

Carlos remained on the bluff, still gazing down on the Presidio. He seemed to be maturing some plan. He could see the sentries on the battlements, the troopers lounging around the walls in their dark blue and crimson uniforms. He could even hear the call of the cavalry bugle, as its clear echoes came dancing along the cliffs. He could see the figure of a man—an officer pacing to and fro on the azotea, and he could perceive that the latter had halted, and was observing him.

It was at this very moment that Vizcarra had caught sight of the horseman on the bluff

—the sight that had so terrified him, and which indeed was no illusion.

"Can it be that fiend himself?" thought Carlos, regarding the officer for a moment. "Quite likely it is he. Oh! that he were within range of my rifle! Patience—patience! I will yet have my revenge!"

And as the speaker muttered these words, he reined back from the bluff, and rejoined his companion.

A consultation was now held as to what would be the best mode of proceeding. Antonio was called to their council, and to him Carlos declared his belief that his sister was a captive within the Presidio. It was telling Antonio what he had already divined. The *mestizo* had been to the fiesta as well as his master, and his keen eyes had been busy on that day. He, too, had observed the conduct of Vizcarra; and long before their halt he had

arrived at an elucidation of the many mysteries that marked the late Indian incursion. He knew all—his master might have saved words in telling him.

Neither words nor time were wasted. The hearts of both brother and lover were beating too hurriedly for that. Perhaps at that moment the object of their affection was in peril,—perhaps struggling with her ruffian abductor! Their timely arrival might save her!

These considerations took precedence of all plans; in fact, there was no plan they could adopt. To remain concealed—to skulk about the place—to wait for opportunity—what opportunity? They might spend days in fruitless waiting. Days!—hours—even minutes would be too long. Not a moment was to be lost before some action must be taken.

And what action? They could think of none—none but open action. What! dare a man not claim his own sister? Demand her restoration?

But the thought of refusal — the thought of subterfuge — in fact, the certainty that such would be the result, quite terrified them both.

And yet how else could they act? They would at least give publicity to the atrocious deed; that might serve them. There would be sympathy in their favour—perhaps more. Perhaps the people, slaves as they were, might surround the Presidio, and clamour loudly;—in some way the captive might be rescued. Such were their hurried reflections.

"If not rescued," said Carlos, grinding his teeth together, "she shall be revenged. Though the *garotta* press my throat, he shall not live if she be dishonoured. I swear it!"

"I echo the oath!" cried Don Juan, grasping the hilt of his *machete*.

"Masters! dear masters!" said Antonio, "you both know I am not a coward. I shall aid you with my arm or my life; but it is a terrible business. Let us have caution, or we fail. Let us be prudent!"

"True, we must be prudent. I have already promised that to my mother; but how, comrades? — how? In what does prudence consist — to wait and watch, while she ——oh!"

All three were silent for a while. None of them could think of a feasible plan to be pursued.

The situation was, indeed, a most difficult one. There was the Presidio, and within its walls — perhaps in some dark chamber, the cibolero well knew his sister was a captive; but under such peculiar circumstances, that

her release would be a most difficult enterprise.

In the first place, the villain who held her would assuredly deny that she was there. To have released her would be an acknowledgment of his guilt. What proof of it could Carlos give? The soldiers of the garrison, no doubt, were ignorant of the whole transaction — with the exception of the two or three miscreants who had acted as aids. Were the cibolero to assert such a thing in the town, he would be laughed at — no doubt arrested and punished. Even could he offer proofs, what authority was there to help him to justice? The military was the law of the place, and the little show of civic authority that existed would be more disposed to take sides against him than in his favour. He could expect no justice from any quarter. All the proof of his accusation would rest only on such facts as

would neither be understood nor regarded by those to whom he might appeal. The return trail would be easily accounted for by Vizcarra — if he should deign to take so much trouble — and the accusation of Carlos would be scouted as the fancy of a madman. No one would give credence to it. The very atrociousness of the deed rendered it incredible!

Carlos and his companions were aware of all these things. They had no hope of help from any quarter. There was no authority that could give them aid or redress.

The cibolero, who had remained for a while silent and thoughtful, at length spoke out. His tone was altered. He seemed to have conceived some plan that held out a hope.

"Comrades!" he said, "I can think of nothing but an open demand, and that must

be made within the hour. I cannot live another hour without attempting her rescue—another hour, and what we dread — No! within the hour it must be. I have formed a sort of plan — it may not be the most prudent — but there is no time for reflection. Hear it."

"Go on!"

"It will be of no use our appearing before the gate of the Presidio in full force. There are hundreds of soldiers within the walls, and our twenty Tagnos, though brave as lions, would be of no service in such an unequal fight. I shall go alone."

"Alone!"

"Yes; I trust to chance for an interview with *him*. If I can get that, it is all I want. He is her gaoler; and when the gaoler sleeps, the captive may be freed. He shall *sleep then!*"

The last words were uttered in a significant tone, while the speaker placed his hand mechanically upon the handle of a large knife that was stuck in his waist-belt.

"*He shall sleep*, then!" he repeated; "and soon, if Fate favours me. For the rest I care not: I am too desperate. If she be dishonoured I care not to live, but I shall have full revenge!"

"But how will you obtain an interview?" suggested Don Juan. "He will not give *you* one. Would it not be better to disguise yourself? There would be more chance of seeing him that way?"

"No! I am not easily disguised, with my light hair and skin. Besides, it would cost too much time. Trust me, I will not be rash. I have a plan by which I hope to get near him—to see him, at all events. If it fail, I intend to make no demonstration

for the present. None of the wretches shall know my real errand. Afterwards I may do as you advise, but now I cannot wait. I must on to the work. I believe it is he that is at this moment pacing yonder azotea, and that is why I cannot wait, Don Juan. If it be he ——"

"But what shall we do?" asked Don Juan. "Can we not assist in any way?"

"Yes, perhaps in my escape. Come on, I shall place you. Come on quickly. Moments are days. My brain 's on fire. Come on!"

So saying, the cibolero leaped into his saddle and struck rapidly down the precipitous path that led to the valley.

From the point where the road touched the valley bottom, for more than a mile in the direction of the Presidio, it ran through a thick growth of low trees and bushes form-

ing a "chapparal," difficult to pass through, except by following the road itself.

But there were several cattle-paths through the thicket, by which it might be traversed; and these were known to Antonio the half-blood, who had formerly lived in this neighbourhood. By one of these, a party of mounted men might approach within half-a-mile of the Presidio without attracting the observation of the sentries upon the walls. To this point, then, Antonio was directed to guide the party; and in due time they arrived near the edge of the jungle, where, at the command of Carlos, all dismounted, keeping themselves and their horses under cover of the bushes.

"Now," said the cibolero, speaking to Don Juan, "remain here. If I escape, I shall gallop direct to this point. If I lose my horse, you shall see me a-foot all the

same. For such a short stretch I can run like a deer: I shall not be overtaken. When I return, I shall tell you how to act.

"See! Don Juan!" he continued, grasping the ranchero by the arm, and drawing him forward to the edge of the chapparal; "It is he! by heaven! it is he!"

Carlos pointed to the azotea of the Presidio, where the head and shoulders of a man were seen above the line of the parapet.

"It is the Commandante himself!" said Don Juan, also recognising him.

"Enough! I have no time for more talk," cried the cibolero. "Now or never! If I return, you shall know what to do. If not, I am taken or killed. But stay here. Stay till late in the night; I may still escape. Their prisons are not too strong; besides, I carry this gold. It may help me. No more. Adios! true friend, adios!"

With a grasp of the ranchero's hand, Carlos leaped back to his saddle, and rode off.

He did not go in the direction of the Presidio, as that would have discovered him too soon. But a path that led through the chapparal would bring him out on the main road that ran up to the front gate; and this path he took. Antonio guided him to the edge of the timber, and then returned to the rest.

Carlos, once on the road, spurred his horse into a gallop, and dashed boldly forward to the great gate of the Presidio. The dog Cibolo followed, keeping close up to the heels of his horse.

## CHAPTER VI.

"By the Virgin, it *is* he!" exclaimed Roblado, with a look of astonishment and alarm. "The fellow himself, as I live!"

"I knew it!—I knew it!" shrieked Vizcarra. "I saw him on the cliff: it was no vision!"

"Where can he have come from? In the name of all the saints, where has the fellow ——"

"Roblado, I must go below! I must go in. I will not stay to meet him! I *cannot!*"

"Nay, Colonel, better let him speak with us. He has seen and recognised you already. If you appear to shun him, it will arouse

suspicion. He has come to ask our help to pursue the Indians; and that's his errand, I warrant you!"

"Do you think so?" inquired Vizcarra, partially recovering his self-possession at this conjecture.

"No doubt of it! What else? He can have no suspicion of the truth. How is it possible he could, unless he were a witch, like his mother? Stay where you are, and let us hear what he has got to say. Of course, you can talk to him from the azotea, while he remains below. If he show any signs of being insolent, as he has already been to both of us, let us have him arrested, and cooled a few hours in the calabozo. I hope the fellow will give us an excuse for it, for I haven't forgotten his impudence at the fiesta."

"You are right, Roblado; I shall stay and hear him. It will be better, I think, and will

allay any suspicion. But, as you say, he can have none!"

"On the contrary, by your giving him the aid he is about to ask you for, you may put him entirely off the scent—make him your friend, in fact. Ha! ha!"

The idea was plausible, and pleased Vizcarra. He at once determined to act upon it.

This conversation had been hurriedly carried on, and lasted but a few moments—from the time the approaching horseman had been first seen, until he drew up under the wall.

For the last two hundred yards he had ridden slowly, and with an air of apparent respect—as though he feared it might be deemed rude to approach the place of power by any swaggering exhibition of horsemanship. On his fine features traces of grief might be observed, but not one sign of the

feeling that was at that moment uppermost in his heart.

As he drew near, he raised his sombrero in a respectful salute to the two officers, whose heads and shoulders were just visible over the parapet; and having arrived within a dozen paces of the wall, he reined up, and, taking off his hat again, waited to be addressed.

"What is your business?" demanded Roblado.

"Cavalleros! I wish to speak with the Commandante."

This was delivered in the tone of one who is about to ask a favour. It gave confidence to Vizcarra, as well as to the bolder villain—who, notwithstanding all his assurances to the contrary, had still some secret misgivings about the cibolero's errand. Now, however, it was clear that his first conjecture was correct;

Carlos had come to solicit their assistance.

"I am he!" answered Vizcarra, now quite recovered from his fright. "I am the Commandante. What have you to communicate, my man?"

"Your excellency, I have a favour to ask;" and the cibolero again saluted with an humble bow.

"I told you so," whispered Roblado to his superior. "All safe, my Colonel."

"Well, my good fellow," replied Vizcarra, in his usual haughty and patronising manner, "let me hear it. If not unreasonable ——"

"Your excellency, it is a very heavy favour I would ask, but I hope not unreasonable. I am sure that if it do not interfere with your manifold duties, you will not refuse to grant it, as the interest and trouble you have already taken in the cause are but too well known."

"Told you so," muttered Roblado a second time.

"Speak out, man!" said Vizcarra, encouragingly; "I can only give an answer when I have heard your request."

"It is this, your excellency. I am but a poor cibolero."

"You are Carlos the cibolero! I know you!"

"Yes, your excellency, we have met—at the fiesta of San Juan ——"

"Yes, yes! I recollect your splendid horsemanship."

"Your excellency is kind to call it so. It does not avail me now. I am in great trouble!"

"What has befallen? Speak out, man!"

Both Vizcarra and Roblado guessed the purport of the cibolero's request. They desired that it should be heard by the few

soldiers lounging about the gate, and for that reason they spoke in a loud tone themselves, anxious that their petitioner might do the same.

Not to oblige them, but for reasons of his own, Carlos replied in a loud voice. He, too, wished the soldiers, but more particularly the sentry at the gate, to hear what passed between himself and the officers.

"Well, your excellency," replied he, "I live in a poor rancho, the last in the settlement, with my old mother and sister. The night before last it was attacked by a party of Indians — my mother left for dead — the rancho set on fire, and my sister carried off!"

"I have heard of all this, my friend,—nay, more, I have myself been out in pursuit of the savages."

"I know it, your excellency. I was absent on the Plains, and only returned last night. I have heard that your excellency was

prompt in pursuing the savages, and I feel grateful."

"No need of that; I only performed my duty. I regret the occurrence, and sympathise with you; but the villains have got clear off, and there is no hope of bringing them to punishment just now. Perhaps some other time—when the garrison here is strengthened—I shall make an incursion into their country, and then your sister may be recovered."

So completely had Vizcarra been deceived by the cibolero's manner, that his confidence and coolness had returned, and any one knowing nothing more of the affair than could be gathered from that conversation, would have certainly been deceived by him. This dissimulation both in speech and manner appeared perfect. By the keen eye of Carlos, however—with his knowledge of the true situation—the tremor of the speaker's lips—slight as it was

— his uneasy glance, and an occasional hesitancy in his speech, were all observed. Though Carlos was deceiving *him*, *he* was not deceiving Carlos.

"What favour were you going to ask?" he inquired, after he had delivered his hopeful promise.

"This, your excellency; that you would allow your troops to go once more on the trail of the robbers, either under your own command—which I would much like—or one of your brave officers." Roblado felt flattered. "I would act as guide, your excellency. There is not a spot within two hundred miles I am not acquainted with, as well as I am with this valley; and though I should not say it, I assure your excellency, I can follow an Indian trail with any hunter on the Plains. If your excellency will but send the troop, I promise you I shall guide them to the robbers, or lose

my reputation. I can follow their trail *wherever it may lead.*"

"Oh! you could, indeed?" said Vizcarra, exchanging a significant glance with Roblado, while both exhibited evident symptoms of uneasiness.

"Yes, your excellency, anywhere."

"It would be impossible," said Roblado. "It is now two days old; besides *we* followed it beyond the Pecos, and we have no doubt the robbers are by this time far out of reach of any pursuit. It would be quite useless to attempt such a thing."

"Cavalleros!" Carlos addressed himself to both, "I assure you *I* could find them. They are not so far off."

Both the Commandante and his captain started, and visibly turned pale. The cibolero did not affect to notice this.

"Nonsense! my good fellow!" stammered Roblado; "they are—at least—hundreds of miles off by this—away over the Staked Plain—or to—to the mountains."

"Pardon me, Captain, for differing with you; but I believe I know these Indians—I know to what tribe they belong."

"What tribe?" simultaneously inquired the officers, both with an earnestness of manner and a slight trepidation in their voices; "What tribe?—Were they not Yutas?"

"No," answered the cibolero, while he observed the continued confusion of his questioners.

"Who, then?"

"I believe," replied Carlos, "they were *not* Yutas—more likely my sworn foes, the Jicarillas."

"Quite possible!" assented both in a

breath, and evidently relieved at the enunciation.

"Quite possible!" repeated Roblado. "From the description given us by the people who saw them, we had fancied they were the Yutas. It may be a mistake, however. The people were so affrighted, they could tell but little about them. Besides the Indians were only seen in the night."

"Why think you they are the Jicarillas?" asked the Commandante, once more breathing freely.

"Partly because there were so few of them," replied Carlos. "Had they been Yutas ——"

"But they were not so few? The shepherds report a large band. They have carried off immense numbers of cattle. There must have been a considerable force of them, else

they would not have ventured into the valley — that is certain."

"I am convinced, your excellency, there could not have been many. A small troop of your brave soldiers would be enough to bring back both them and their booty."

Here the lounging lanzeros erected their dwarfish bodies, and endeavoured to look taller.

"*If* they were Jicarillas," continued Carlos, "I should not need to follow their trail. They are *not* in the direction of the Llano. If they have gone that way, it was to mislead you in the pursuit. I know where they are at this moment — in the mountains."

"Ha! you think they are in the mountains?"

"I am sure of it; and not fifty miles from here. If your excellency would but send a

troop, I could guide it direct to the spot, and without following the trail they have taken out of the valley—which I believe was only a false one."

The Commandante and Roblado drew back from the parapet, and for some minutes talked together in a low tone.

"It would look well," muttered Roblado; "in fact, the very thing you want. The trump cards seem to drop right into your hands. You send a force at the *request* of this fellow, who is a nobody here! You do him a service, and yourself at the same time. It will tell well, I warrant you."

"But for him to act as guide?"

"Let him! So much the better — that will satisfy all parties. He won't find his Jicarillas, — ha! ha! ha! — of course; but let the fool have his whim!"

"But suppose, camarado, he falls upon *our* trail?—the cattle?"

"He is not going in that direction; besides, if he did, we are not bound to follow such trails as he may choose for us; but he has said he is not going that way—he don't intend to follow a trail. He knows some nest of these Jicarillas in the mountains,—like enough; and to rout them—there's a bit of glory for some one. A few scalps would look well over the gate. It hasn't had a fresh ornament of that sort since we've been here! What say you? It's but a fifty-mile ride?"

"I have no objection to the thing—it *would* look well; but I shall not go myself. I don't like being along with the fellow out there or anywhere else—you can understand that feeling, I suppose?"

Here the Commandante looked significantly at his companion.

"Oh! certainly,—certainly," replied the latter.

"*You* may take the troop; or if you are not inclined, send Garcia or the sergeant with them."

"I'll go myself," replied Roblado. "It will be safer. Should the cibolero incline to follow certain trails, I can lead him away from them, or refuse — yes, it will be better for me to go myself. By my soul! I want to have a brush with these redskins. I hope to bring back some 'hair,' as they say. Ha! ha! ha!"

"When would you start?"

"Instantly—the sooner the better. That will be more agreeable to all parties, and will prove our promptitude and patriotism. Ha! ha! ha!"

"You had better give the sergeant his

orders to get the men ready, while I make our cibolero happy."

Roblado hastened down from the azotea, and the next moment the bugle was heard sounding "boots and saddles."

## CHAPTER VII.

During the conversation that had taken place the cibolero sat motionless upon his horse where he had first halted. The two officers were no longer in view, as they had stepped back upon the azotea, and the high parapet concealed them. But Carlos guessed the object of their temporary retirement, and waited patiently.

The group of soldiers, lounging in the gateway, and scanning him and his horse, now amounted to thirty or forty men; but the bugle sounding the well-known call, summoned them off to the stables, and the sentry alone remained by the gate. Both he and the

soldiers having overheard the late conversation, guessed the object of the summons. Carlos felt assured that his request was about to be granted, though as yet the Commandante had not told him.

Up to that moment the cibolero had conceived no fixed plan of action. How could he, where so much depended on chance?

Only one idea was before his mind, that could be called definite — that was *to get Vizcarra alone*. If but for a single minute, it would suffice.

Entreaty, he felt, would be idle, and might waste time and end in his own defeat and death. A minute would be enough for vengeance; and with the thoughts of his sister's ruin fresh on his mind, he was burning for this. To anything after he scarce gave a thought. For escape, he trusted to chance and his own superior energy.

Up to that moment, then, he had conceived no fixed plan of action. It had just occurred to him that the Commandante himself might lead the party going out. If so he would take no immediate step. While acting as guide, his opportunity would be excellent—not only for destroying his enemy, but for his own escape. Once on the wide plains, he would have no fear of ten times the number of lancers. His true steed would carry him far beyond their reach.

The troop was going. The bugle told him so. Would Vizcarra go with it? That was the question that now engrossed his thoughts, as he sat immobile on his horse, regarding with anxious look the line of the parapet above.

Once more the hated face appeared over the wall—this time to announce what the Commandante believed would be glad news

to his wretched petitioner. With all the pompous importance of one who grants a great favour he announced it.

A gleam of joy shot over the features of the cibolero — not at the announcement, though Vizcarra thought so; but at his observation of the fact that the latter seemed to be now *alone upon the azotea*. Roblado's face was not above the wall.

"It is exceedingly gracious of your excellency, to grant this favour to an humble individual like myself. I know not how to thank you."

"No thanks—no thanks—an officer of his Catholic Majesty wants no thanks for doing his duty."

As the Commandante said this, he waved his hand with proud dignity, and seemed about to retire backward. Carlos interrupted his intention by putting a question: "Am I

to have the honour of acting as guide to your excellency?"

"No; I do not go myself on this expedition; but my best officer, Captain Roblado, will lead it. He is now getting ready. You may wait for him."

As Vizcarra said this, he turned abruptly away from the wall, and continued his promenade along the azotea. No doubt he felt ill at ease in a *téte-à-téte* with the cibolero, and was glad to end it. Why he had condescended to give all this information need not be inquired into; but it was just what the cibolero desired to know.

The latter saw that the time was come—not a moment was to be lost, and, quick as thought, he resolved himself for action.

Up to this moment he had remained in his saddle. His rifle—its butt resting in the stirrup, its barrel extending up to his shoulder

—had been seen by no one. The "*armas de aqua*" covering his legs, and the serapé his shoulders, had completely concealed it. In addition to this, his sharp hunting-knife, strapped along his left thigh, escaped observation under the hanging corner of the serapé. These were his only weapons.

During the short conversation between the Commandante and Roblado, he had not been idle, though apparently so. He had made a full reconnaissance of the walls. He saw that out of the saguan, or gateway, an escalera of stone steps led up to the azotea. This communication was intended for the soldiers, when any duty required them to mount to the roof; but Carlos knew that there was another escalera, by which the officers ascended; and although he had never been inside the Presidio, he rightly conjectured that this was at the adjacent end of

the building. He had observed, too, that but one sentry was posted at the gate, and that the stone banquette, inside the saguan, used as a lounging place by the guard, was at the moment unoccupied. The guard were either inside the house, or had strayed away to their quarters. In fact, the discipline of the place was of the loosest kind. Vizcarra, though a dandy himself, was no martinet with his men. His time was too much taken up with his own pleasures, to allow him to care for aught else.

All these points had passed under the keen observation of the cibolero, before Vizcarra returned to announce his intention of sending the troop. He had scarce parted out of sight the second time, ere the former had taken his measures.

Silently dismounting from his horse, Carlos left the animal standing where he had halted

him. He did not fasten him to either rail or post, but simply hooked the bridle-rein over the "horn" of the saddle. He knew that his well-trained steed would await him there.

His rifle he still carried under his serapé, though the butt was now visible below the edge, pressed closely against the calf of his leg. In this way he walked forward to the gate.

One doubt troubled him—would the sentry permit him to pass in? If not, the sentry must die!

This resolve was quickly made; and the cibolero under his serapé kept his grasp on the handle of his hunting-knife as he approached the gate.

The attempt was made to pass through. Fortunately for Carlos, and for the sentry as well, it was successful. The latter—a slouch-

ing, careless fellow—had heard the late conversation, and had no suspicion of the other's design. He made some feeble opposition, notwithstanding; but Carlos hastily replied that he had something to say to the Commandante, who had beckoned him up to the azotea. This but half satisfied the fellow, who, however, reluctantly allowed him to pass.

Once inside, Carlos sprang to the steps, and glided up with the stealthy silent tread of a cat. So little noise had his moccasins made upon the stones, that when he arrived upon the roof, its occupant—although standing but six feet from the head of the escalera—was not aware of his presence!

There was he—Vizcarra himself—the despot—the despoiler—the violator of a sister's innocence and honour—there was he within six feet of the avenging brother—

six feet from the muzzle of his ready rifle, and still ignorant of the terrible situation! His face was turned in an opposite direction—he saw not his peril.

The glance of the cibolero rested upon him but an instant, and then swept the walls to ascertain if any one was above. He knew there were two sentries on the towers. They were not visible—they were on the outer walls and could not be seen from Carlos's position. No one else was above. His enemy alone was there, and his glance again rested upon him.

Carlos could have sent the bullet into his back, and such a thought crossed his mind, but was gone in an instant. He had come to take the man's life, but not in that manner. Even prudence suggested a better plan. His knife would be more silent, and afford him a safer chance of escape when the deed was done!

With this idea, he brought the butt of his rifle gently to the ground, and rested its barrel against the parapet. The iron coming in contact with the stone wall gave a tiny clink. Slight as it was, it reached the ear of the Commandante, who wheeled suddenly round, and started at the sight of the intruder.

At first he exhibited anger, but the countenance of the cibolero, that had undergone a complete metamorphosis during the short interval, soon changed his anger into alarm.

"How dare you intrude, sir?—how dare ——"

"Not so loud, Colonel!—not so loud—you will be heard!"

The low husky voice, and the firm tone of command in which they were uttered, terrified the cowardly wretch to whom these words were addressed. He saw that the man who

stood before him bore in his face and attitude the expression of desperate and irresistible resolve, that plainly said, "Disobey, and you are a dead man!"

This expression was heightened by the gleaming blade of a long knife, whose haft was firmly grasped by the hand of the cibolero.

At sight of these demonstrations, Vizcarra turned white with terror. He now comprehended what was meant. The asking for the troop had been but a subterfuge to get near his own person! The cibolero had tracked him; his guilt was known; and the brother was now come to demand redress or have vengeance! The horrors of his night dream returned, now mingling with the horrors of the fearful reality before him.

He scarce knew what to say—he could scarce speak. He looked wildly around in hopes of seeing some help. Not a face or

form was in sight—nothing but the grey walls, and before him the frowning face of his terrible antagonist. He would have called for help; but that face—that angry attitude told him that the shout would be his last. He gasped out at length,—

"What want you?"

"*I want my sister!*"

"Your sister?"

"My sister!"

"Carlos—I know not—she is not here—I——"

"Liar! she is within these walls. See! yonder the dog howls by the door. Why is that?"

Carlos pointed to a door in the lower part of the building, where the dog Cibolo was at that moment seen, whining and making other demonstrations, as if he wanted

to get inside! A soldier was endeavouring to drive him off.

Vizcarra looked mechanically as directed. He saw the dog. He saw the soldier too; but dared not make a signal to him. The keen blade was gleaming before his eyes. The question of the cibolero was repeated.

"Why is that?"

"I—I—know not ——"

"Liar again! She has gone in by that door. Where is she now? Quick, tell me!"

"I declare, I know not. Believe me ——"

"False villain! she is here. I have tracked you through all your paths—your tricks have not served you. Deny her once more, and this to your heart. She is here!—Where—where—I say?"

"Oh! do not murder me. I shall tell

all. She—she—is—here. I swear I have not wronged her; I swear I have not ——"

"Here, ruffian — stand at this point— close to the wall here:—Quick!"

The cibolero had indicated a spot from which part of the patio, or courtyard, was visible. His command was instantly obeyed, for the craven Commandante saw that certain death was the alternative.

"Now, give orders that she be brought forth! You know to whom she is intrusted. Be cool and calm, do you hear? Any sign to your minions, either word or gesture, and this knife will pass through your ribs! Now!"

"O my God!—my God!—it would ruin me—all would know—ruin—ruin—I pray you—have mercy—have patience!—She shall be restored to you—I swear it—this very night!"

"This very moment, villain! Quick—proceed—call those who know—let her be brought forth!—Quick—I am on fire—one moment more——"

"O heaven! you will murder me—a moment—Stay!——Ha!"

The last exclamation was in a different tone from the rest. It was a shout of exultation, of triumph!

The face of the Commandante was turned towards the escalera by which Carlos had ascended, while that of the latter looked in the opposite direction. Carlos, therefore, did not perceive that a third person had reached the roof, until he felt his upraised right arm grasped by a strong hand, and held back! He wrenched his arm free—turning as he did so—when he found himself face to face with a man, whom he recognised as the Lieutenant Garcia.

"I have no quarrel with *you*," cried the cibolero; "keep away from me."

The officer, without saying a word, had drawn a pistol, and was levelling it at his head. Carlos rushed upon him.

The report rang, and for a moment the smoke shrouded both Garcia and the cibolero. One was heard to fall heavily on the tiles, and the next moment the other sprang from the cloud evidently unhurt.

It was the cibolero who came forth; and his knife, still in his grasp, was reeking with blood!

He rushed forward towards the spot where he had parted with the Commandante, but the latter was gone! He was some distance off on the azotea, and running toward the private stairway.

Carlos saw at a glance he could not

overtake him before he should reach the escalera, and make his descent; and to follow him below would now be madness, for the shot had given the alarm.

It was a moment of despair,—a short moment; for in the next a bright thought rushed into the mind of the cibolero—he remembered his rifle! There might be still time to overtake the Commandante with that!

He seized the weapon, and springing beyond the circle of smoke, raised it to his shoulder.

Vizcarra had reached the stairway, and was already sinking into its trap-like entrance. His head and shoulders alone appeared above the line of wall, when some half-involuntary thought induced him to stop and look back. The coward had partly got over his fright, now that he had arrived

within reach of succour, and he glanced back from a feeling of curiosity, to see if the struggle between Garcia and the cibolero was yet over. He meant to stop only for an instant, but just as he turned his head, the rifle cracked, and the bullet sent him tumbling to the bottom of the escalera!

The cibolero saw that his shot had taken effect—he saw, moreover, that the other was dead—he heard the wild shouts of vengeance from below; and he knew that unless he could escape by flight he would be surrounded, and pierced by an hundred lances.

His first thought was to descend by the escalera, up which he had come. The other way only led into the patio, already filling with men.

He leaped over the body of Garcia, and ran toward the stairway.

A crowd of armed men was coming up. His escape was cut off!

Again he crossed the dead body, and running along the azotea, sprang upon the outer parapet and looked below.

It was a fearful leap to take, but there was no other hope of escaping. Several lancers had reached the roof, and were charging forward with their pointed weapons. Already carbines were ringing, and bullets whistling about his ears. It was no time to hesitate. His eye fell upon his brave horse, as he stood proudly curving his neck and champing the bit. "Thank heaven, he is yet alive!"

Nerved by the sight, Carlos dropped down from the wall, and reached the ground without injury.

A shrill whistle brought his steed to his side, and the next moment the cibolero had

sprung into the saddle, and was galloping out into the open plain!

Bullets hissed after, and men mounted in hot pursuit; but before they could spur their horses out of the gateway, Carlos had reached the edge of the chapparal, and disappeared under the leafy screen of its thick foliage.

A body of lancers, with Roblado and Gomez at their head, rode after. As they approached the edge of the chapparal, to their astonishment a score of heads appeared above the bushes, and a wild yell hailed their advance!

"Indios bravos! Los barbaros!" cried the lancers halting, while some of them wheeled back in alarm.

A general halt was made, and the pursuers waited until reinforcements should come up. The whole garrison turned out,

and the chapparal was surrounded, and at length entered. But no Indians could be found, though the tracks of their animals led through the thicket in every direction.

After beating about for several hours, Roblado and his troopers returned to the Presidio.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Garcia was dead. Vizcarra was not; though, when taken up from where he had fallen, he looked like one who had not long to live, and behaved like one who was afraid to die. His face was covered with blood, and his cheek showed the scar of a shot. He was alive however,—moaning and mumbling. Fine talking was out of the question, for several of his teeth had been carried away by the bullet.

His wound was a mere face wound. There was not the slightest danger; but the "medico" of the place, a young practitioner, was not sufficiently master of his art to give

him that assurance, and for some hours Vizcarra remained in anything but blissful ignorance of his fate.

The garrison doctor had died but a short time before, and his place was not yet supplied.

A scene of excitement for the rest of that day was the Presidio — not less so the town. The whole settlement was roused by the astounding news, which spread like a prairie fire throughout the length and breadth of the valley.

It travelled in two different shapes. One was, that the settlement was surrounded by "los barbaros," headed by Carlos the cibolero; that they must be in great numbers, since they had made an open attack upon the military stronghold itself; but that they had been beaten off by the valiant soldiers after a desperate conflict, in which many were killed on both sides; that the

officers were all killed, including the Commandante; and that another attack might be looked for that night, which would most likely be directed against the town! This was the first shape of the "novedades."

Another rumour had it that the "Indios mansos" had revolted; that *they* were headed by Carlos the cibolero; that they had made an unsuccessful attempt upon the Presidio, in which, as before, the valiant soldiers had repulsed them with great loss on both sides, including the Commandante and his officers; that this was but the first outbreak of a great conspiracy, which extended to all the Tagnos of the settlement, and that no doubt the attack would be renewed that night!

To those who reflected both forms of the rumour were incomprehensible. Why should "Indios bravos" attack the Presidio before proceeding against the more defenceless town

as well as the several rich haciendas? And how could Carlos the cibolero be their leader? Why should he of all men,—he who had just suffered at the hands of the savages? It was well known through the settlement that it was the cibolero's sister who had been carried off. The idea of an Indian incursion, with him at the head of it, seemed too improbable.

Then, again, as to the conspiracy and revolt. Why, the tame Indians were seen labouring quietly in the fields, and those belonging to the mission were engaged at their usual occupations! News, too, had come down from the mines—no symptoms of conspiracy had been observed there! A revolt of the Tagnos, with the cibolero at their head, would, of the two rumours, have been the more likely to be true; for it was well known to all that these were far from

content with their lot—but at present there was no appearance of such a thing around. There were they all at their ordinary employments. Who, then, were the revolters? Both rumours, therefore, were highly improbable.

Half the town-people were soon gathered around the Presidio, and after stories of all shapes had been carried back and forward, the definite facts at length became known.

These, however, were as mysterious and puzzling as the rumours. For what reason could the cibolero have attacked the officers of the garrison? Who were the Indians that accompanied him? Were they "bravos" or "mansos?"—savages or rebels?

The most remarkable thing was, that the soldiers themselves who had taken part in the imaginary "fight" could not answer these questions. Some said this, and some that. Many had heard the conversation between

Carlos and the officers; but that portion of the affair, though perfectly natural in itself when taken in connexion with after circumstances, only rendered the whole more complicated and mysterious! The soldiers could give no explanation; and the people returned home, to canvass and discuss the affair among themselves. Various versions were in vogue. Some believed that the cibolero had come with the *bonâ fide* desire to obtain help against the Indians—that those who accompanied him were only a few Tagnos whom he had collected to aid in the pursuit—and that the Commandante, having first promised to aid him, had afterwards refused, and that this had led to the strange conduct of the cibolero!

There was another hypothesis that gained more credit than this. It was that Captain Roblado was the man whom the cibolero had

desired to make a victim; that he was guided against him by motives of jealousy; for the conduct of Carlos on the day of the fiesta was well known, and had been much ridiculed—that, in failing to reach Roblado, he had quarrelled with the Commandante, and so forth.

Improbable as was this conjecture, it had many supporters, in the absence of the true motive for the conduct of the cibolero. There were but four men within the Presidio to whom this was known, and only three outside of it. By the general public it was not even suspected.

In one thing all agreed—in condemning Carlos the cibolero. The garotta was too good for him; and when taken, they could all promise him ample punishment. The very ingratitude of the act was magnified. It was but the day before that these same officers

had gone forth with their valiant soldiers to do him a service! The man must have been mad! His mother had no doubt bewitched him!

To have killed Lieutenant Garcia!—he who was such a favourite! *Carrambo!*

This was true. Garcia was liked by the people of the settlement—perhaps not so much from the possession of any peculiar virtues, but in contrast with his superiors. He was an affable, harmless sort of person, and had won general esteem.

That night the cibolero had not one friend in San Ildefonso. Nay, we speak wrongly. He had *one.* There was one heart beating for him as fondly as ever—Catalina's—but she, too, was ignorant of the motives which had led to his mysterious conduct.

Whatever these motives were, she knew they could not be otherwise than just. What

to her were the calumnies—the gibes—that were heaped upon him? What to her if he had taken the life of a fellow-creature? He had not done so without good cause—without some fearful provocation. She believed that in her soul. She knew his noble nature too well to think otherwise. He was the lord of her heart, and could do no wrong!

Sorrowful, heart-breaking news was it to her. It boded long separation—perhaps for ever! He dared no more visit the town—not even the settlement! He would be driven to the wild plains—hunted like the wolf or the savage bison — perhaps taken and slain! Bitter were her reflections. When should she see him again? Maybe, never!

## CHAPTER IX.

During all this time Vizcarra lay groaning upon his couch — not so much with pain as fear, for the fear of death still haunted him. But for that, his rage would have been boundless; but this passion was in abeyance — eclipsed by the terrors that flitted across his conscience.

Even had he been assured of recovery he would still have been in dread. His imagination was diseased by his dream and the after reality. Even surrounded by his soldiers, he feared the cibolero, who appeared able to accomplish any deed and escape its consequences. He did not even feel secure there

in his chamber, with guards at the entrance, against that avenging arm!

Now, more than ever, he was desirous of getting rid of the cause — more than ever anxious that she should be got rid of; but he reflected that now, more than ever, was that a delicate and difficult matter. It would undoubtedly get abroad *why* the cibolero had made such a desperate attempt upon his life— it would spread until it reached high quarters —such a report could not be passed over—an investigation might be ordered; and that, unless he could destroy every trace of suspicion, might be his ruin.

These were his reflections while in the belief that he was going to recover; when a doubt of this crossed his mind, he grew still more anxious about the result.

Roblado had hinted at a way in which all might be arranged. He waited with im-

patience for the latter to make his appearance. The warlike Captain was still engaged in beating the chapparal; but Gomez had come in and reported, that he was about to give up the search, and return to the Presidio.

To Roblado the occurrences of the day had been rather pleasant than otherwise; and a close observer of his conduct could have told this. If there was anything in the whole business that really annoyed him, it was the wound of the Commandante — it was *not* mortal! Roblado, more experienced than the surgeon, knew this well. The friendship that existed between the two was a fellow-feeling in wickedness — a sort of felon's bond — durable enough so long as there was no benefit to either in breaking it. But this friendship did not prevent Roblado from regretting with all his heart, that the bullet had not hit *his friend* a little higher up or a

little lower down—either in the skull or the throat! He entertained this regret from no malice or ill-will towards the Commandante, but simply from a desire to benefit himself. It was long since Roblado had been dreaming of promotion. He was not too humble to hope he might one day command the Presidio himself. Vizcarra's death would have given him that station at once; but Vizcarra was not to die just then, and this knowledge somewhat clouded the joy he was then experiencing.

And it was joy. Garcia and he had been enemies. There had been jealousy and ill-will between them for long; therefore the lieutenant's death was no source of regret to him. But the joy of Roblado owed partly its origin to another consequence of that day's drama — one that affected him

more than any — one that was nearest his heart and his hopes.

Absurd as appeared the pretensions of the cibolero in regard to Catalina, Roblado had learned enough of late to make him jealous — aye, even to give him real uneasiness. She was a strange creature Catalina de Cruces — one who had shown proofs of a rare spirit — one not to be bought and sold like a *bulto* of goods. She had taught both her father and Roblado a lesson of late. She had taught them that. She had struck the ground with her little foot, and threatened a convent — the grave — if too rudely pressed! She had not rejected Roblado — that is, in word; but she insisted on having *her own time to make answer;* and Don Ambrosio was compelled to concede the point.

Under such circumstances her suitor felt

uneasy. Not so much that he was jealous—though he did love her after his own fashion, and was piqued at the thought of such a rival —but he feared that spirit of hers, and dreaded that her splendid fortune might yet escape him. Such a woman was capable of the wildest resolve. She *might* take to a convent; or maybe *to the plains* with this base-born cibolero! Such an event in the life of such a woman would be neither impossible nor unlikely. In either case she could not take her fortune with her; but what mattered? it would not remain with him, Roblado.

The conduct of the cibolero had removed all obstacles, so far as he was concerned. There was no longer any dread of rivalry from that source. His life was now forfeited. Not only would he be cut off from all communication with her, but he would

not dare to show himself in the settlement. A constant vigilance would be kept on foot to guard against that, and Roblado even promised himself the enjoyment of rare sport in hunting down his rival, and becoming at the same time his captor and executioner.

These were the ideas that crossed the mind of the savage captain, and that made him feel satisfied at the events of the day.

After scouring the chapparal, and following the track of the supposed Indians to the ceja of the table plain, he returned with his men to the Presidio, to make preparations for a more prolonged pursuit.

## CHAPTER X.

Roblado's arrival brought relief to Vizcarra, as he lay chafing and fretting.

Their conversation was, of course, upon the late occurrence, and Roblado gave his account of the pursuit.

"And do you really think," inquired the Commandante, "that the fellow had a party of savages with him?"

"No!" answered Roblado. "I did think so at first—that is, the men thought so, and I was deceived by their reports. I am now convinced they were not Indian bravos, but some of those Tagno friends of his; for it appears the padré was right. He has a suspicious connexion. That of itself might

have been sufficient cause for us to have arrested him long ago; but now we need no cause. He is ours, when we can catch him."

"How do you propose to act?"

"Why, I have no doubt he will lead us a long chase. We must do the best we can to follow his trail. I came back to provision the men so that we can keep on for a sufficient time. The rascals have gone out of the valley by the upper pass, and perhaps have taken to the mountains. So thinks Gomez. We shall have to follow, and endeavour to overtake them. We must send express to the other settlements, so that the cibolero may be captured if he make his appearance in any of them. I don't think he will attempt that."

"Why?"

"Why! because it appears the old witch is still alive! and, moreover, he will hang

around here so long as he has any hopes of recovering the sister."

"Ha! you are right; he will do so. He will never leave me till she ——"

"So much the better; we shall have all the finer opportunity of laying hands on him, which, believe me, my dear Colonel, will be no easy matter. The fellow will be watchful as a wolf, and on that superb horse of his can escape from our whole troop. We 'll have to capture him by some stratagem."

"Can you think of none?"

"I have been thinking of one."

"What?"

"Why, it is simply this—in the first place, for the reasons I have given, the fellow will hang around the settlement. He may visit now and then the old *hechicera*, but not often. The other would be a better decoy."

"You mean her?" Vizcarra indicated

the direction of the room in which Rosita was confined.

"I do. He is said to be foolishly fond of this sister. Now, were she in a place where he could visit her, I'll warrant he would come there; and then we could trap him at our pleasure."

"In a place!—where?" eagerly demanded Vizcarra.

"Why, back to her own neighbourhood. They'll find some residence. If you will consent to let her go *for a while*, you can easily recover her—*the more easily when we have settled with him!*"

"Consent, Roblado!—it is the very thing I desire above all things. My mind will not be easy while she is here. We are both in danger if such a report should get in circulation. If it should reach certain ears, we are ruined—are we not?"

"Why, *now* there is some truth in what you say. Garcia's death must be reported, and the cause will be inquired into. We must have *our* story as plausible as it can be made. There must be no colour of a suspicion—no rumour! It will be well to get her off hands for the present."

"But how—that it is that troubles me—how, without increasing the chances of suspicion? If we send her home, how is it to be explained? That would not be the act of *Indians?* You said you had some plan?"

"I *think* I have. But first tell me, Colonel, what did you mean by saying she was *mad?*"

"That she was so; is so still,—so says José,—within the hour, muttering strange incongruities—knows not what is said to her. I tell you, Roblado, it terrified *me*."

"You are sure she knows not what is said to her?"

"Sure of it."

"So much the better. She will then not remember where she *is* or *has been*. Now I *know* that I have a plan—nothing easier than to get her off. She shall go back and tell—if she can tell anything—that she has been in the hands of the Indians! That will satisfy you?"

"But how can it be arranged?"

"My dear Commandante, no difficulty in it. Listen! To-night, or before day in the morning, Gomez and José, in Indian costume as before, can carry her off to some spot, which I shall indicate. In the mountains be it. No matter how far off or how near. She may be tied, and found in their company in the morning, in such a way as to appear *their captive*. So much the better if she has

recovered her senses enough to think so. Well; I with the troopers, in hunt after the cibolero, will come upon these Indians by accident. A few shots may be fired, at sufficient distance to do them no hurt. They will make off, leaving their captive, whom we will rescue and bring back to the town, where she can be delivered out of our hands! Ha! ha! ha! What think you, Commandante, of my scheme?"

"Excellent!" replied Vizcarra, his mind seemingly relieved at the prospect of its execution.

"Why it would blind the very devil! We shall not only be free from suspicion, but we'll get credit by it. What! a successful affair with the savages!—rescue of a female captive!—restore her to her friends!—she, too, the sister of the very man who has endeavoured to assassinate you! I tell you, Com-

mandante, the cibolero himself, if that will be any comfort to you, will be humbugged by it! She will swear—*if her word be worth anything*—that she has been in the hands of *los barbaros* all the while! She will give the lie even to her own brother!"

"The plan is excellent. It must be done to-night!"

"To-night, of course. As soon as the men have gone to bed, Gomez can start with her. I must give over the idea of following the trail to-day; and, in truth, I regard that as idle. Our only chance for taking him will be to set our trap, with her for its bait; and that we can arrange hereafter. Give yourself no farther uneasiness about it. By late breakfast to-morrow I shall make my report to you,—Desperate affair with Jicarillas, or Yutas—several warriors killed—female captive rescued—valiant conduct of troops—recommend Cor-

poral —— for promotion, &c. Ha! ha! ha!"

The Commandante joined in this laugh, which, perhaps, he would not have done, but that Roblado had already assured him that his wound was not of the slightest danger, and would heal in a couple of weeks.

Roblado had given him assurance of this by calling the doctor a fool, and heaping upon him other opprobrious epithets. The delivery, therefore, from the fear of apprehended death, as well as from the other thought that was torturing him, had restored Vizcarra to a composure he had not enjoyed for the twenty-four hours preceding; and he now began to imbibe, to its full extent, another passion—that of vengeance against the cibolero.

* * * * *

That night, after tattoo had sounded, and the soldiers had retired to their respective

quarters, a small mounted party was seen to issue from the gateway of the Presidio, and take a road that led in the direction of the mountains. The party consisted of three individuals. One, closely wrapped, and mounted upon a mule, appeared to be a female. The other two, oddly attired, and fantastically adorned with paint and feathers, might have been taken for a brace of Indian warriors. But they were not Indians. They were Spanish soldiers in Indian disguise. They were Sergeant Gomez and the soldier José, in charge of the cibolero's sister.

## CHAPTER XI.

When Carlos reached the edge of the chapparal, his pursuers were still only parting from the walls of the Presidio. Of course none followed him on foot, and it had taken the men some time to get their arms and horses ready. So far as he was concerned, he no longer feared pursuit, and would have scorned to take a circuitous path. He had such confidence in the steed he bestrode, that he knew he could escape before the eyes of his pursuers, and need not have hidden himself in the chapparal.

As he rode into the ambuscade he was thinking no longer of his own safety, but of

that of Don Juan and his party. Their critical situation suddenly came before his mind. How were *they* to escape?

Even before he had half crossed the open ground, this thought had troubled him more than his own peril, and a plan had been before him:—to make direct for the pass of La Niña, and shun the chapparal altogether. This would have drawn the dragoons in the same direct course; and Don Juan, with his Tagnos, might have got off at their leisure.

Carlos would have put this plan in execution, could he have trusted to the prudence of Don Juan; but he feared to do so. The latter was somewhat rash, and not oversagacious. Seeing Carlos in the act of escape, he might think it was his duty, as agreed upon, to show himself and his men on the edge of the thicket—the very thing Carlos now wished to prevent. For that reason the

cibolero galloped direct to the place of ambuscade, where Don Juan and his men were waiting in their saddles.

"Thank God you are safe!" cried Don Juan; "but they are after you. Yonder they come in scores!"

"Yes!" replied Carlos, looking back; "and a good start I've gained on them!"

"What's best to be done?" inquired Don Juan. "Shall we scatter through the chapparal, or keep together? They'll be upon us soon!"

Carlos hesitated a moment before making reply. Three plans of action were possible, offering more or less chance of safety. First, to scatter through the chapparal as Don Juan had suggested; second, to make off together and at once *without showing themselves*, taking the back track, as they had come; and, third, to *show themselves* in front to the pursuers,

and then retire on the back path. Of course the idea of fight was not entertained for a moment. That would have been idle, even absurd, under the circumstances.

The mind of the cibolero, used to quick action, examined these plans with the rapidity of thought itself. The first was rejected without a moment's consideration. To have scattered through the chapparal, would have resulted in certain capture. The jungle was too small, not over a couple of miles in width, though extending to twice that length. There were soldiers enough to surround it, which they would do. They would beat it from side to side. They could not fail to capture half the party; and though these had made no demonstration as yet, they would be connected with the affair at the Presidio, and would be severely punished, if not shot down on the spot.

To attempt to get off through the chapparal without showing themselves at all, would have been the plan that Carlos would have adopted, had he not feared that they would be overtaken before night. The Tagnos were mounted on mules, already jaded, while most of the troopers rode good and swift horses. But for that Carlos might have hoped that they would escape unseen, and thus neither Don Juan nor his people would have been suspected of having had any part in the affair. This would be an important consideration for the future; but the plan was not to be thought of. The third plan was adopted.

The hesitation of the cibolero was not half so long as the time you have occupied in reading of it. Scarce ten seconds elapsed ere he made reply, not to Don Juan alone, but to the whole band, in a voice loud

enough for all to hear. The reply was in the form of a command.

"Ride through the bush, all of you! Show yourselves near the front! your heads and shoulders only, with your bows! Give your war-cry! and then back till you are out of sight! Scatter right and left!—Follow me!"

As Carlos delivered these hurried directions, he dashed forward through the underwood and soon appeared near its edge. The Tagnos, guarded by Don Juan on one side and Antonio on the other, showed almost simultaneously in an irregular line along the margin of the thicket; and flourishing their bows above their heads they uttered a defiant war-whoop, as though they were a party of savage Indians.

It would have required a practised eye to have told from a short distance that they

were not. Most of them were bare-headed, with long flowing hair; and, in fact, differing very little in appearance from their brethren of the plains. They all had bows, a weapon still carried by the Indios mansos when engaged in any hostilities; and their war-cry differed not at all from some tribes called "bravos," "wild." Many in the band had but a short time left aside the full practice of warfare. Many of them were but neophytes to the arts of peace.

The effect of the demonstration was just what the cibolero had calculated on. The soldiers, who were galloping forward in straggling knots, and some of whom had got within three hundred paces of the chapparal, reined up in surprise. Several showed symptoms of a desire to gallop back again, but these were restrained at sight of a large body of their comrades now issuing from the Presidio.

The whole of them were taken by surprise. They believed that the "Indios bravos" were in the chapparal, and no doubt in overwhelming numbers. Their belief was strengthened by the proceedings of the previous days, in which they had done naught else, as they supposed, but ride scout after "los barbaros." The latter had now come after *them!* They halted, therefore, on the plains, and waited for their fellows to come up.

That this would be the effect of his *ruse* Carlos foresaw. He now directed his companions to rein gently back, until they were once more under cover of the brush; and the whole party arrived at the spot where they had waited in ambush.

Antonio then took the trail, and guided them through the chapparal; not as they had come to La Niña, but by a path that led to the upper plain by another pass in the cliffs.

From a point in this pass they obtained a distant view of the chapparal and the plain beyond. Though now full three miles from their place of ambush, they could see the valiant troopers still figuring on the open ground in front of it. They had not yet ventured to penetrate the dangerous underwood which they believed to be alive with ferocious savages!

Carlos, having reached the upper plain, struck off with his band in a direction nearly north. His object was to reach a ravine at some ten miles distance across the plain, and this was gained without a single pursuer having appeared in the rear.

This ravine led in an easterly direction as far as the Pecos bottom. It was the channel of a stream, in which water flowed in the rainy season, but was now quite dry. Its bed was covered with small pebbles, and

a horse-trail upon these was scarcely to be followed, as the track only displaced the pebbles, leaving no "sign" that could be "read" to any advantage. Old and new foot-marks were all the same.

Into this ravine the party descended, and after travelling down it for five or six miles, halted. Carlos called the halt for a special object—to detail a plan for their future proceeding, which had been occupying his attention during the last hour or two.

As yet, none of the party were compromised but himself. It would not advantage him that they should be, but the contrary. Neither Don Juan nor Antonio had shown themselves out of the thicket; and the other dusky faces, seen but for an instant through the brambles, could not have been recognised by the frightened troopers. If, therefore, Don Juan and his peons could get back to

their home without observation, for them all would still be well.

This was a possible event. At starting Carlos had cautioned secresy as to the expedition. It had left at an early hour, before any one was abroad, and no one knew of it. Indeed, no one in the valley was aware that the cibolero had returned before the news of the affair at the Presidio. His mules had been quietly unpacked, and were herded at a distance from the rancho by one of his men. If, then, the troopers should not visit that neighbourhood before the following day, Don Juan and his people could go back in the night and engage in their usual occupations without any suspicion. No doubt Roblado would be there in the morning, but not likely before. It was natural to suppose, he would first endeavour to follow the route they had taken, and it led almost in the

opposite direction from the house of Don Juan. To track them along all the windings of that route would be the work of one day at least. Then their pursuers would be no wiser as to where they had betaken themselves, for Carlos, from the point of halting, intended to adopt a plan that would be certain to throw the troopers off the trail.

It was decided, in fine, that Don Juan and his people should return home—that the peons of Carlos should also go back to the rancho; roof it on the following day—for it only wanted that—and remain by it as if nothing had occurred. They could not be made answerable for the deeds of their master.

As for the cibolero himself, his residence must remain unknown, except to one or two of his tried friends. He knew where he should find a shelter. To him the open plain

or the mountain cave was alike a home. He needed no roof. The starry canopy was as welcome as the gilded ceiling of a palace.

The Tagnos were enjoined to secresy. They were not sworn. A Tagno is not the man to talk; besides, they all knew that their own safety, perhaps their lives, depended on their silence.

All these matters were at length arranged, but the party remained where they had halted till near sunset. They then mounted, and continued on down the channel.

When they had gone a mile or so, one of them climbed out of the ravine, and heading southward, rode off across the plain. This direction would bring him back to the valley, by a pass near the lower end of the settlement. It would be night by the time he could reach this pass, and he was not likely

to encounter any one on the route—now that the "wild" Indians were abroad!

Shortly after, a second Tagno left the ravine, and rode off in a line nearly parallel to that taken by the first. Soon another imitated the example, and another and another, until all had forsaken the ravine except Don Juan, Antonio, and the cibolero himself. The Tagnos had been instructed to reach home by different passes, and some of them, more sagacious, were sent by the most circuitous paths. There was no trooper belonging to the Presidio likely to follow that trail!

Carlos and his two companions, after riding to the farthest end of the ravine, also turned to the right, and re-entered the valley of San Ildefonso at its lower extremity. It was quite dark, but all of them knew the road well, and about midnight they

arrived near the house of the young ranchero.

A reconnaissance was necessary before they dared approach. That was soon made, and the report brought back that all was right, and no troopers had yet made their appearance.

Carlos once more embraced his mother hurriedly, related what had passed, gave some instructions to Don Juan, and then mounting his horse, rode off from the place.

He was followed by Antonio and a pack-mule loaded with provisions. They passed down the valley, and struck out in the direction of the Llano Estacado.

## CHAPTER XII.

On the following day a new incident created a fresh surprise among the inhabitants of San Ildefonso, already excited by an unusual series of "novedades."

About noon, a party of lancers passed through the town on their way to the Presidio. They were returning from a scout in search of the "assassin"—so Carlos was designated. Of him they had found no traces; but they had fallen in with a large body of "Indios bravos" among the spurs of the mountains, with whom they had had a terrific conflict! This had resulted in the loss of great numbers killed on the part of the Indians, who had

contrived, as usual, to carry off their dead—hence, the soldiers had returned without scalps! They had brought, however,—a far more positive trophy of victory—a young girl belonging to the settlement, whom they had re-captured from the savages, and whom, Captain Roblado—the gallant leader of the expedition—*supposed* to be the same that had been carried off a few days before from a rancho at the lower end of the valley!

The Captain halted in the plazza, with a few men—those in charge of the recovered captive. The remainder of the troop passed on to the Presidio.

Roblado's object in stopping in the town, or in coming that way—for it did not lie in his return route—was threefold. First, to deliver his charge into the hands of the civic authorities. Secondly, to make sure that everybody should witness the delivery, and

be satisfied by this living evidence that a great feat had been performed; and thirdly, that he might have the opportunity of a little swagger in front of a certain balcony.

These three objects the captain attained, but the last of them did not turn out quite to his satisfaction. Although the bugle had played continuously, announcing the approach of a troop—although the recovered captive was placed conspicuously in the ranks—and although his (Roblado's) horse, under the influence of sharp spurs, pitched himself into the most superb attitudes, all went for nothing—Catalina did not show in the balcony! Among the faces of "dependientes" and "criados," hers was not to be seen; and the triumphant look of the victorious leader, as soon as he had ridden past, changed to a gloomy expression of disappointment.

A few minutes after he dismounted in

front of the "Casa de Cabildo," where he delivered the girl into the hands of the alcalde and other authorities of the town. This ceremony was accompanied by a grandiloquent speech, in which an account of the re-capture was given with some startling details; sympathy was expressed for the parents of the girl, *whoever they might be;* and the speaker wound up by expressing his opinion that the unfortunate captive could be no other than the young girl reported to have been carried off a few days before!

All this was very plausible and proper; and Roblado, having resigned his charge to the keeping of the alcalde, mounted and rode off amidst a storm of complimentary phrases from the authorities, and "vivas" of applause from the populace.

"*Dios lo pague, capitan!*" (God reward

you, captain!) was the prayer that reached his ears as he pushed through the crowd!

A keen physiognomist could at that moment have detected in the corner of Roblado's eye a very odd expression—a mingling of irony with a strong desire to laugh. In fact, the gallant captain could hardly keep from bursting out in the faces of his admirers, and was only restrained from doing so by the desire of keeping the joke bottled up till he could enjoy it in the company of the Commandante—to whom he was now hastening.

Back to the captive.

The crowd pressed around her, all eager to gratify their curiosity. Strange to say that this feeling predominated. There was less appearance of sympathy than might have been looked for under the circumstances. The number of those that uttered the "po-

brecita!"—that tender expression of Mexican pity—was few; and they were principally the poor dark-skinned native women. The well-dressed shopkeepers, both Gachupinos and Criollos, both men and women, looked on with indifference, or with no other feeling than that of morbid curiosity.

Such an indifference to suffering is by no means a characteristic of the New Mexican people—I should rather say of the females of that land—for the men are brutal enough. As regards the former, the very opposite character is theirs.

Their conduct would be unaccountable, therefore, but for the knowledge of a fact which guided it on this occasion. They knew who the captive girl was—they knew she was the sister of Carlos the cibolero—Carlos *the murderer!* This it was that checked the flow of their better feelings.

Against Carlos, the popular indignation was strong. "Asesino," "ladron," "ingrato," were the terms used in speaking of him. A wretch! to have murdered the good lieutenant—the favourite of the place; and for what motive? Some paltry quarrel or jealousy! What motive, indeed? There seemed no motive but a thirst of blood on the part of this "demonio," this "güero heretico." Ungrateful wretch, too, to have attempted the life of the valiant Commandante—he who had been striving all he could to recover the assassin's sister from the Indian savages!

And now he had actually succeeded! Only think of it! There she was, brought safe home again by the agency of this very Commandante, who had sent his Captain and soldiers for her,—this very man whom he would have killed! *Demonio! asesino!*

*ladron!* They would all be glad to see him seated in the chair of the "garrota." No "bueno Catolico" would have acted as he had done—no one but a sinful "heretico"—a blood-loving "Americano!" How he would be punished *when caught!*

Such were the feelings of all the populace, except, perhaps, the poor slaves—the *mansos* —and a very few Criollos, who, although not approving of the acts of Carlos, held revolutionary principles, and hated the Spanish *régime* with all their hearts.

With such prejudice against the cibolero, no wonder that there was but little sympathy for the forlorn creature, his sister.

That it *was* his sister no one doubted, although there were few on the spot who knew either. Up to the day of the fiesta her brother, now so notorious, was but little known to the inhabitants of the town, which

he rarely visited—she less; and there were but few in the place who had ever seen her before that hour. But the identity was unmistakeable. The fair, golden hair, the white skin, the glowing red of the cheeks, though common in other parts of the world, were rare characteristics in North Mexico. The proclamation upon the walls described the "asesino" as possessing them. This could be no other than his sister. Besides, there were those who had seen her at the fiesta, where her beauty had not failed to attract both admiration and envy.

She looked beautiful as ever, though the red was not so bright on her cheek, and a singular, wild expression appeared in her eyes. To the questions put to her she either answered not or returned vague replies. She sat in silence; but several times broke forth into strange, unintelligible, exclamatory

phrases, in which the words "Indios" and "barbaros" repeatedly occurred.

"*Esta loco!*" ("She is mad!") muttered one to another; "she fancies she is still with the savages!"

Perhaps it was so. Certainly she was not among friends.

The alcalde inquired if there was any one present — relative or friend — to whom he could deliver her up.

A young girl, a poblana, who had just arrived on the spot, came forward. She knew the "pobrecita." She would take charge of her, and conduct her to her home.

A half-Indian woman was in company with the poblana. It might have been her mother. Between the two the restored captive was led away; and the crowd soon dispersed, and returned to their various avocations.

The girl and her conductors turned into a narrow street that led through the suburb where the poorest people lived. Passing this, they emerged into the open country; and then, following an unfrequented path through the chapparal, a few hundred yards brought them to a small mud rancho, which they entered. In a few minutes after a carreta, in which sat a peon, was driven up to the door, and stopped there.

The poblana, leading the girl by the hand, came out of the house, and both mounted into the carreta.

As soon as the two were seated upon the bunches of dry "zacate" thrown into the carreta for this purpose, the driver goaded his oxen and moved off. The vehicle, after passing out of the chapparal path, took the main road leading to the lower settlements of the valley.

As they moved on, the poblana regarded her companion with kind looks, and assisted her in arranging her seat, so as to defend her as much as possible against the joltings of the carreta. She added numerous expressions of a sympathizing and consolatory character, but none that bespoke recognition or old acquaintance. It was evident that the girl had never seen Rosita before!

When they had got about a mile from the town, and were moving along an unfrequented part of the road, a horseman was seen coming after, and at such a speed as to overtake them in a few minutes. He was mounted on a pretty mustang, that bore the signs of being well cared for. Its flanks were rounded with fat, and it capered as it galloped along.

As it came close to the carreta the rider called out to the driver to stop; and it then appeared that the *horseman* was a *woman*, as

the soft, sweet voice at once indicated. More than that, the rider was a *señorita*, as the soft cheek, the silky hair, and the delicate features, showed. At a distance it was natural enough to have taken her for one of the opposite sex. A common serapé covered her shoulders; a broad-brimmed sombrero concealed most of her black shining hair; and she rode according to the general custom of the country — the custom of its men.

"Why, Señorita!—is it you?" asked the poblana, in a tone of surprise, and with a gesture of respect.

"Ha! ha! you did not know me, then, Josefa?"

"No, Señorita; — *ay de mi!* how could I in that disguise?"

"Disguise do you call it? Why, it is the usual costume!"

"True, Señorita; but not for a grand señora like you. *Carrambo!*"

"Well, I think I must be disguised, as I passed several acquaintances who would not bow to me! Ha! ha!"

"*Pobrecita — ita — ita!*" continued she, suddenly changing her tone, and regarding Josefa's companion with a look of kind sympathy. "How she must have suffered! Poor dear girl! I fear it is true what they have told me. *Santissima Virgen!* how like ——"

The phrase was left unfinished. The speaker had forgotten the presence of Josefa and the peon, and was delivering her thoughts in too loud a soliloquy. The unfinished sentence had involuntarily escaped from her lips.

Suddenly checking herself, she looked sharply towards the two. The peon was busy with his oxen, but the poblana's face wore an expression of curiosity.

"Like whom, Señorita?" innocently inquired she.

"One whom I know. No matter, Josefa;" and, as the lady said this, she raised her finger to her lips, and looked significantly towards the peon.

Josefa, who knew her secret, and who guessed the "one" meant, remained silent. After a moment the lady drew her mustang nearer the carreta, upon the side on which Josefa sat, and, bending over, whispered to the latter: —

"Remain below till the morning; you will be too late to return to-night. Remain! perhaps you may hear something. Come early — not to the house. Be in time for *oracion*. You will find me in the church. Perhaps you may see Antonio. If so, give him this." A diamond set in a golden circlet sparkled a moment at the tips of the lady's

fingers, and then lay hid in the shut fist of the poblana. "Tell him *for whom*—he need not know who sent it. There is money for your expenses, and some to give her; or give it to her mother, *if they will accept it.*" Here a purse fell in Josefa's lap. "Bring me news! oh, bring me news, dear Josefa! *Adios! adios!*"

The last salutation was uttered hurriedly; and, as the lady pronounced it, she wheeled her glossy mustang and galloped back towards the town.

She need not have doubted that Josefa would fulfil her instructions about "remaining below until the morning;" for the poblana was nearly, if not quite, as much interested as herself in this journey. The rather pretty Josefa chanced to be the sweetheart of the half-blood, Antonio; and whether she saw Antonio or not, she was not likely to hurry

back that night. If she did see him, so much the pleasanter to remain; if not, she should remain in the hope of such an event.

With a full purse of "pesos" — a sixth of which would pay all expenses — and the prospect of meeting with Antonio, the rough carreta seemed all at once transformed to an elegant coach, with springs and velvet cushions, — such as Josefa had heard of, but had never seen!

The kind-hearted girl readjusted the seats, placed the head of Rosita on her lap, spread her reboso over her to keep off the evening dew, and then told the peon to move on. The latter uttered a loud "ho-ha!" touched his oxen with the goad, and once more set them in motion along the dusty road.

## CHAPTER XIII.

Early morning prayer in the "iglesia" is a fashionable custom among the señoras of Mexico — particularly among those who dwell in cities and towns. Close upon the heels of daybreak, you may see them issuing from the great doors of their houses, and hurrying through the streets towards the chapel, where the bell has already begun its deafening "ding-dong." They are muffled beyond the possibility of recognition — the richer in their silken shawls and mantas, the poorer in their slate-coloured rebosos; under the folds of which each carries a little bound volume—the "*misa*."

Let us follow them into the sacred temple, and see what passes there.

If we arrive late, and take station near the door, we shall be presented with the spectacle of several hundred backs in a kneeling position — that is, the individuals to whom the backs belong will be found kneeling.

These backs are by no means alike — no more than faces are. They are of all shapes, and sizes, and colours, and classes in the social scale. You will see the backs of ladies in shawls — some of whom have permitted that elegant garment to fall to the shoulders, while others retain it over the crowns of their heads, thus creating two very distinct styles of back. You will see the backs of pretty poblanas, with the end of their rebosos hanging gracefully over them; and the back of the poblana's mother with the reboso ill arranged, and not over clean. You will see the back of the

merchant scarcely covered with a short cloth jacket, and the back of the "aguador" cased in well-worn leather; the back of the "guapo" muffled in a cloak of fine broad-cloth, and that of the "lepero" shrouded in a ragged serapé; and then you will see broad backs and slender ones, straight backs and crooked ones; and you run a good chance of beholding a hunch or two — especially if the church be in a large town. But wheresoever you enter a Mexican iglesia during prayer time, I promise you the view of an extensive assortment of backs. Not classified, however. Quite the contrary. The back of the shawled lady may be inclusive between two greasy rebosos, and the striped or speckled back of the lepero may rise up alongside the shining broad-cloth of the dandy! I do not answer for any classification of the backs; I only guarantee their extensive number and variety. The only face that is likely

to confront you at this moment will be the shaven phiz of a fat priest, in full sacerdotal robes of linen, that were once, no doubt, clean and white, but that look now as if they had been sent to the buck-basket, and by some mistake brought back before reaching the laundry. This individual, with a look as unlike heaven as the wickedest of his flock, will be seen stirring about on his little stage; now carrying a wand — now a brazen pot of smoking "incense," and anon some waxen doll — the image of a saint; while in the midst of his manipulations you may hear him "mumming" a gibberish of ill-pronounced Latin. If you have witnessed the performance of M. Robin, or the "Great Wizard," you cannot fail to be reminded of them at this moment.

The tinkling of a little bell, which you will presently hear, has a magical effect upon the backs. For a short while you may have

observed them in an odd attitude — not erect as backs ought to be, but slouching and one-sided. During this interval, too, you may catch a glance of a face — merely the profile — and if it be pretty, you will forget the back; but then the party is no longer a back in the proper sense. You won't be struck with the devotion of the profile, if you are with its prettiness. You may observe it wink or look cunningly, and if your observation be good, you may note another profile, of coarser mould, corresponding to that wink or cunning glance. This goes on while the backs are in their "slouch" or attitude of repose. How that attitude is produced will be to you a mystery, an anatomical puzzle; but it may be explained. It is simple enough to those who know it. It is brought about by the back changing its base, from the marrow-bones to the hips; and this is done so adroitly, that, under cover

of shawls, mantas, rebosos, and skirts, it is no wonder you are puzzled by it.

The little bell, however, brings the backs all right again. It is to these devotees what the "Attention!" is to the rank and file of an army; and the moment the first tinkle is heard, backs up is the movement, and all become suddenly elevated several inches above their former standard. Thus they remain, stiff and erect, while the priest mumbles a fresh "Ave Maria," or "Pater noster," and goes through a fresh exhibition of pantomime. Then the backs are suddenly shortened again, the profiles appear as before — nods, and winks, and cunning glances, are exchanged — and that till the little bell sounds a second time. And then there will be a third course of this performance, and a fourth, and so on, till the worship (!) is ended.

This ridiculous genuflexion and mummery

you may see repeated every morning in a Mexican "iglesia," long before the hour of breakfast. Both men and women engage in it, but by far the greater number of the devotees are of the gentler sex, and many of them the fashionable señoras of the place.

One is inclined to inquire into the motives that draw so many people out of their beds, to shiver through the streets and in the cold church at such an early hour. Is it religion? Is it superstition? Is it penance? Is it devotion? No doubt many of these silly creatures really believe that the act is pleasing to God; that these genuflexions and orisons, mechanically repeated, will give them grace in His eyes. But it is very certain that many of the most constant attendants on these morning prayers are actuated by very different feelings. In a land of jealous men, you will

find the women peculiarly intelligent and cunning, and the matutinal hour is to them the "golden opportunity." He is a very jealous guardian, indeed, whose vigil tempts him from his couch at so chill an hour!

Await the end of the performance by the door of the "iglesia." There stands a large vase filled with the consecrated water. Each, in passing out, takes a dip and a sprinkle. In this basin you will see the small jewelled hand immerse its finger-tips, and the next moment adroitly deliver a *carte d'amour* to some cloaked cavallero. Perhaps you may see the wealthy señora, in the safe disguise of the serapé, leave the church in a direction opposite to that by which she came. If you are curious enough to follow — which would be extremely ill-bred — you might witness under the trees of the "alameda," or some unfrequented quarter, the forbidden "*entre-vista.*"

The morning, in a Mexican city, has its adventures as well as the night.

* * * * *

The bell of the church of San Ildefonso had just commenced to ring for "oracion," when a female form was seen issuing from the gateway of one of the largest mansions of the town, and taking the direction of the church. It was yet scarce daybreak, and the person thus observed was closely muffled; but her tall upright form, the dignity and grace of her carriage, and the proud elastic step, told that she was a grand señora. As she reached the portal of the church she stopped for some moments, and looked around. Her face was not visible, as it was "tapada" under the folds of a closely-drawn manta; but her attitude, with her head occasionally moving around, showed that she was scanning the figures that, at the summons of the bell,

approached like shadows through the grey light. She was evidently expecting some one; and from the eager scrutiny with which she regarded each new form that entered the plazza, it was some one whose presence was much desired.

The last of the devotees had arrived and entered the church. It would be idle to remain longer; and, turning on her heel with an air that betokened disappointment, the lady glided across the portal, and disappeared through the door.

In another moment she was kneeling in front of the altar, repeating her orisons and telling over the beads of her rosary.

She was not the last to enter the church; still another devotee came later. About the time that she was leaving the portal, a carreta drove into the plazza, and halted in a remote corner. A young girl leaped out of the car-

reta, tripped nimbly across the square, in the direction of the church, and passed within the portal. The dress of this new-comer — a flaming red "nagua," broidered chemisette, and reboso — showed that she belonged to the poorer class of citizens. She was a poblana.

She entered the church, but before kneeling she threw an inquiring glance along the array of backs. Her eye became fixed upon one that was covered with a manta. It was that of the lady of whom we have spoken. This seemed to satisfy the poblana, who, gliding over the floor, knelt down in such a position that her elbow almost rested against that of the lady.

So silently had this movement been executed, that the lady did not perceive her new neighbour until a slight "nudge" upon the elbow caused her to start and look round.

A gleam of satisfaction lit up her features, though her lips continued to repeat the prayer, as if nothing had happened.

After a while came the cue for adopting the *pose* of rest, and then the two kneeling figures — señorita and poblana — dropped towards each other, so that their arms touched. A moment later, and two hands became uncovered — one a little brown-skinned paw from under the reboso — the other, a delicate arrangement of white and jewelled fingers, from the manta.

They came in contact, as if by a mutual understanding, and though they were *en rapport* but a half second, a close observer might have noticed a small roll of paper passed from one to the other — from the brown fingers to the white ones! It would have required a close observer to have noticed this manœuvre, for so adroitly was it executed, that none of those

kneeling around, either in front or rear, saw anything amiss.

The two hands again disappeared under their respective covers; the little bell tinkled, and both señora and poblana once more shot into an upright position, and, with most devout looks, repeated the prayers of the misa.

When the "oracion" was over, and while sprinkling themselves at the sacred fount, a few hurried words passed between them; but they went out of the church separately, and walked off in separate directions. The poblana hastened across the square, and disappeared into a narrow street. The señora walked proudly back to the mansion whence she had come, her countenance radiant with joyful anticipation.

As soon as she had entered the house, she proceeded directly to her own chamber, and, opening the little folded slip of paper, read:—

"Querida Catalina!—You have made me happy. But an hour ago, I was the most wretched of men. I had lost my sister, and I feared your esteem. Both are restored to me. My sister is by my side, and the gem that sparkles on my finger tells me that even calumny has failed to rob me of your friendship—your love. *You* do not deem me an assassin. No. Nor am I one. I have been an avenger, but no assassin. You shall know all—the fearful plot of which I and mine have been the victims. It is scarce credible—so great is its atrocity! I am indeed its victim. I can no more show myself in the settlement. I am henceforth to be hunted like the wolf, and treated as one, if captured. I care not for that, so long as I know that you are not among my enemies.

"But for you, I should go far hence. I cannot leave you. I would sooner risk life

every hour in the day, than exile myself from the spot where you dwell—you, the only being I can ever love.

"I have kissed the gem a hundred times. In life, the sweet token can never part from me.

"My foes are after me like bloodhounds, but I fear them not. My brave steed is never out of my sight, and with him I can scorn my cowardly pursuers. But I must venture one visit to the town. I must see you once, querida. I have words for you I cannot trust to paper. Do not refuse to see me, and I shall come to the old place of meeting. To-morrow night—midnight. Do not refuse me, dearest love. I have much to explain that I cannot without seeing you face to face. You shall know that I am not an assassin—that I am still worthy of being your lover.

"Thanks!—thanks for your kindness to my poor little wounded bird! I trust to God she will soon be well again. *Mia querida, Adios!* "C."

When the beautiful lady had finished reading the note, she pressed it to her lips, and fervently kissed it.

"Worthy of being my lover!" she murmured; "aye, worthy to be the lover of a queen! Brave noble Carlos!"

Again she kissed the paper, and, thrusting it into her bosom, glided softly from the apartment.

## CHAPTER XIV.

Vizcarra's desire for revenge grew stronger every hour. The almost joyful reaction he had experienced, when relieved from the fear of death, was short-lived. So, too, was that which followed his relief from the anxiety about his captive. The thought that now tortured him was of a different character. The very breath of his existence—his personal appearance—was ruined for ever. He was disfigured for life!

When the mirror was passed before his face, it caused his heart to burn like a coal of fire. Coward though he was, he would almost as soon have been killed outright.

Several of his teeth were gone. They might have been replaced; but not so could be restored the mutilated cheek. A portion had been carried off by the "tear" of the bullet. There would be a hideous scar never to be healed!

The sight was horrible. His thoughts were horrible. He groaned outright, as he contemplated the countenance which the cibolero had given him. He swore vengeance. Death—and torture if he could but capture Carlos—death to him and his.

At times, he even repented that he had sent away the sister. Why should he have cared for consequences? Why had he not revenged himself upon *her?* He no longer loved her. Her scornful laugh still rankled in his heart. She had been the cause of all his sufferings—of sufferings that would never end but with his life—chagrin and mortification for the rest of

his days! Why had he not taken *her* life? That would have been sweet revenge upon the brother. It would almost have been satisfaction.

He tossed upon his couch, tortured with these reflections, and giving utterance at intervals to groans of anguish and horrid imprecations.

Carlos must be captured. No effort must be spared to ensure that event. And captured *alive*, if possible. He should measure out the punishment. It should be death; but not sudden death. No. The savages of the plains should be his teachers. The cibolero should die like a captive Indian—by fire at the stake. Vizcarra swore this!

After him, the mother, too. She was deemed a witch. She should be punished as often witches have been. In this he would not have to act alone. He knew that the

padrés would endorse the act. They were well inclined to such fanatical cruelties.

Then the sister, alone—uncared for by any one. She would be wholly in his power—to do with her as he would, and no one to stay his will. It was not love, but revenge.

Such terrible resolves passed through the mind of the wretched caitiff.

Roblado was equally eager for the death of the cibolero. His vanity had been scathed as well, for he was now satisfied that Catalina was deeply interested in the man, if not already on terms of intimacy—on terms of love, mutually reciprocated and understood. He had visited her since the tragical occurrence at the Presidio. He had observed a marked change in her manner. He had thought to triumph by the malignant abuse heaped on the *assassin;* but she, although she said nothing in defence of the latter,—of

course she could not—was equally silent on the other side, and showed no symptoms of indignation at the deed. His (Roblado's) abusive epithets, joined to those which her own father liberally heaped upon the man, seemed to give her pain. It was plain she would have defended him, had she dared!

All this Roblado had noticed during his morning call.

But more still had he learnt, for he had a spy upon her acts. One of her maids, Vicenza, who for some reason had taken a dislike to her mistress, was false to her, and had, for a length of time, been the confidant of the military wooer. A little gold and flattery, and a soldier-sweetheart — who chanced to be José—had rendered Vicenza accessible. Roblado was master of her thoughts, and through José he received information regarding Catalina, of which the

latter never dreamt. This system of espionage had been but lately established, but it had already produced fruits. Through it Roblado had gained the knowledge that he himself was hated by the object of his regard, and that she loved some other! What other even Vicenza could not tell. That other Roblado could easily guess.

It is not strange that he desired the capture and death of Carlos the cibolero. He was as eager for that event as Vizcarra himself.

Both were making every exertion to bring it about. Already scouting parties had been sent out in different directions. A proclamation had been posted on the walls of the town,—the joint production of the Commandante and his captain, offering a high reward for the cibolero's head, and a still higher sum for the cibolero himself if captured alive!

The citizens, to show their zeal and

loyalty, had also issued a proclamation to the same effect, heading it with a large sum subscribed among them — a very fortune to the man who should be so lucky as to be the captor of Carlos. This proclamation was signed by all the principal men of the place, and the name of Don Ambrosio figured high upon the list! There was even some talk of getting up a volunteer company to assist the soldiers in the pursuit of the *heretico* assassin, or rather to earn the golden price of his capture.

With such a forfeit on his head, it was an enigma how Carlos should be long alive!

Roblado sat in his quarters, busy devising plans for the capture. He had already sent his trustiest spies to the lower end of the valley, and these were to hover day and night in the neighbourhood. Any information of the haunts of the cibolero, or of those with

whom he was formerly in correspondence, was to be immediately brought to him, and would be well paid for. A watch was placed on the house of the young ranchero, Don Juan; and though both Vizcarra and Roblado had determined on special action with regard to him, they agreed upon leaving him undisturbed for the present, as that might facilitate their plans. The spies who had been employed were not soldiers, but men of the town, and poor rancheros. A military force appearing below would frustrate their design. That, however, was kept in readiness, but its continued presence near the rancho, thought Vizcarra and his captain, would only frighten the bird, and prevent it from returning to its nest. There was good logic in this.

Roblado, as stated, was in his quarters, completing his arrangements. A knock aroused him from the contemplation of some docu-

ments. They were communications from his spies, which had just reached the Presidio, addressed both to himself and the Commandante. They were concerning the affair.

"Who is it?" he asked, before giving the privilege to enter.

"I, captain," answered a sharp squeaky voice.

Roblado evidently knew the voice, for he called out,—

"Oh! it is you? Come in then."

The door opened, and a small dark man, of sharp weasel-like aspect, entered the room. He had a skulking shuffling gait, and, notwithstanding his soldier's dress, his sabre and his spurs, the man looked mean. He spoke with a cringing accent, and saluted his officer with a cringing gesture. He was just the sort of person to be employed upon some equivocal service, and by such men as Vizcarra and

Roblado; and in that way he had more than once served them. It was the soldier José.

"Well! what have you to say? Have you seen Vicenza?"

"I have, captain. Last night I met her out."

"Any news?"

"I don't know whether it may be news to the captain; but she has told me, that it was the Señorita who sent *her* home yesterday."

"Her?"

"Yes, captain, the güera."

"Ha! go on!"

"Why, you know when you left her with the alcalde she was offered to whoever would take her. Well, a young girl came up and claimed to be an acquaintance, and a woman who was the girl's mother. She was given

up to them without more ado, and they took her away to a house in the chapparal below the town."

"She did not stay there. I know she's gone down, but I have not yet heard the particulars. How did she go?"

"Well, captain; only very shortly after she arrived at the house of the woman, a carreta came up to the door, driven by a Tagno, and the girl—that is, the daughter, who is called Josefa—mounted into the carreta, taking the güera along with her; and off they went down below.

"Now, neither this girl nor her mother ever saw the güera before, and who does captain think sent them, and the carreta, too?"

"Who says Vicenza?"

"The Señorita, captain."

"Ha!" sharply exclaimed Roblado. "Vicenza is sure of that."

"More than that, captain. About the time the carreta drove away, or a little after, the Señorita left the house on her horse, and with a common serapé over her, and a sombrero on her head, like any ranchera; and in this—which I take to be a disguise for a lady of quality like her—she rode off by the back road. Vicenza, however, thinks that she turned into the *camino abajo*, after she got past the houses, and overtook the carreta. She was gone long enough to have done so."

This communication seemed to make a deep impression upon the listener. Shadows flitted over his dark brow, and gleams of some new intelligence or design appeared in his eyes. He was silent for a moment, engaged in communicating with his thoughts. At length he inquired,—

"Is that all your information, José?"

"All, captain."

"There may be more from the same source. See Vicenza to-night again. Tell her to keep a close watch. If she succeed in discovering that there is a correspondence going on, she shall be well rewarded, and *you* shall not be forgotten. Find out more about this woman and her daughter. Know the Tagno who drove them. Lose no time about it. Go, José!"

The minion returned his thanks in a cringing tone, made another cringing salute, and shuffled out of the room.

As soon as he had left, Roblado sprang to his feet, and, walking about the room in an agitated manner, uttered his thoughts aloud:—

"By heaven! I had not thought of this. A correspondence, I have no doubt. Fiends! such a woman! She must know all ere this —if the fellow himself is not deceived by us!

I must watch in that quarter too. Who knows but *that* will be the trap in which we'll take him? Love is even a stronger lure than brotherly affection. Ha! Señorita; if this be true, I'll yet have a purchase upon you that you little expect. I'll bring you to terms without the aid of your stupid father!"

After figuring about for some minutes, indulging in these alternate dreams of vengeance and triumph, he left his room, and proceeded towards that of the Commandante, for the purpose of communicating to the latter his new-gotten knowledge.

## CHAPTER XV.

The house of Don Ambrosio de Cruces was not a town mansion. It was suburban—that is, it stood upon the outskirts of the village, some seven or eight hundred yards from the Plazza. It was detached from the other buildings, and at some distance from any of them. It was neither a "villa" nor a "cottage." There are no such buildings in Mexico, nor anything at all resembling them. In fact, the architecture of that country is of unique and uniform style, from north to south, through some thousand miles of latitude! The smaller kinds of houses,—the "ranchos" of the poorer classes,— show a variety corre-

sponding to the three thermal divisions arising from different elevation — *caliente*, *templada*, and *fria*. In the hot lands of the coast, and some low valleys in the interior, the rancho is a frail structure of cane and poles with a thatch of palm-leaves. On the elevated "valles," or table-plains — and here, be it observed, dwell most of the population — it is built of "adobes," and this rule is universal. On the forest-covered sides of the more elevated mountains, the rancho is a house of logs, a "log-cabin," with long hanging eaves and shingled roof, differing entirely from the log-cabin of the American backwoods, and far excelling the latter in neatness and picturesque appearance.

So much for the "ranchos." About them there is some variety of style. Not so with "casas grandes," or houses of the rich. A sameness characterises them through thirty

degrees of latitude — from one extremity of Mexico to the other; and, we might almost add, throughout all Spanish America. If now and then a "*whimsical*" structure be observed, you may find, on inquiry, that the owner is some foreigner resident—an English miner, a Scotch manufacturer, or a German merchant.

These remarks are meant only for the houses of the country. In small villages the same style as the country-house is observed, with very slight modifications; but in large towns, although some of the characteristics are still retained, there is an approximation to the architecture of European cities — more particularly, of course, to those of Spain.

The house of Don Ambrosio differed very little from the general fashion of "casas grandes" of country style. It had the same aspect of gaol, fortress, convent, or workhouse—

whichever you please — but this aspect was considerably lightened by the peculiar colouring of the walls, which was done in broad vertical bands of red, white, and yellow, alternating with each other! The effect produced by this arrangement of gay colours is quite Oriental, and is a decided relief to the otherwise heavy appearance of a Mexican dwelling. In some parts of the country this fashion is common.

In shape there was no peculiarity. Standing upon the road in front you see a long wall, with a large gateway near the middle, and three or four windows irregularly set. The windows are shielded with bars of wrought-iron standing vertically. That is the "reja." None of them have either sash or glass. The gateway is closed by a heavy wooden door, strongly clasped and bolted with iron. This front wall is but one story

high, but its top is continued so as to form a parapet, breast-high above the roof, and this gives it a loftier appearance. The roof being flat behind, the parapet is not visible from below. Look around the corner at either end of this front wall. You will see no gable — there is no such thing on a house of the kind we are describing. In its place you will see a dead wall of the same height as the parapet, running back for a long distance; and were you to go to the end of it, and again look around the corner, you would find a similar wall at the back closing in the parallelogram.

In reality you have not yet seen the true front of Don Ambrosio's house, if we mean by that the part most embellished. A Mexican spends but little thought on the outside appearance of his mansion. It is only from the courtyard, or "patio," you can get a

view of the front upon which the taste of the owner is displayed, and this often exhibits both grandeur and elegance.

Let us pass through the gateway, and enter the "patio." The "portero," when summoned by knock or bell, admits us by a small door, forming part of the great gate already mentioned. We traverse an arched way, the "zaguan," running through the breadth of the building, and then we are in the patio. From this we have a view of the real front of the house.

The patio itself is paved with painted bricks—a tessellated pavement. A fountain, with jet and ornamental basin, occupies its centre; and several trees, well trimmed, stand in large vessels, so that their roots may not injure the pavement. Around this court you see the doors of the different apartments, some of them glazed and tastefully curtained.

The doors of the "sala," the "cuarto," and the sleeping-rooms, are on three sides, while the "cocina" (kitchen), the "dispensa" (store-room), "granero" (granary), with the "caballeriza" and coach-house, make up the remaining part of the square.

There is still an important portion of the mansion to be spoken of—the "azotea," or roof. It is reached by an "escalera," or stone staircase. It is flat and quite firm, being covered with a cement that is proof against rain. It is enclosed by a parapet running all round it—of such a height as not to hinder the view of the surrounding country, while it protects those occupying it from the intrusive gaze of persons passing below. When the sun is down, or behind a cloud, the azotea is a most agreeable promenade; and to render it still more so—that

over the house of Don Ambrosio had been arranged so as to resemble a flower-garden. Richly japanned pots, containing rare flowers, were placed around, and green boughs and gay blossoms, rising above the top of the wall, produced a fine effect on viewing the building from without.

But this was not the only garden belonging to the mansion of the rich miner. Another, of oblong shape, extended from the rear of the house, enclosed by a high wall of adobes on either side. These, ending upon the bank of the stream, formed the boundary of the garden. Along the stream there was no fence, as it was here of sufficient breadth and depth to form an enclosure of itself. The garden was of large extent, including an orchard of fruit-trees, at its lower part, and it was tastefully laid out in walks, flower-

beds, and arbours of different shapes and sizes. Don Ambrosio, although but a rich *parvenu*, might have been supposed to be a man of refined taste, by any one viewing this garden — the more so, as such delightful retreats are by no means common in that country. But it was to another mind than his that these shadowy trees and fragrant arbours owed their existence. They were the "ideas" of his fair daughter, many of whose hours were spent beneath their shade.

To Don Ambrosio the sight of a great cavity in the earth, with huge quarries of quartz rock or scoria, and a rich "veta" at the back, was more agreeable than all the flowers in the world. A pile of "barras de plata" would be to his eyes more interesting than a whole country covered with black tulips and blue dahlias.

Not so his fair daughter, Catalina. Her taste was both elevated and refined. The thought of wealth, the pride of riches, never entered her mind. She would willingly have surrendered all her much-talked-of inheritance to have shared the humble rancho of him she loved.

## CHAPTER XVI.

It was near sunset. The yellow orb was hastening to kiss the snowy summit of the Sierra Blanca, that barred the western horizon. The white mantle, that draped the shoulders of the mountain, reflected beautiful roseate tints deepening into red and purple in the hollows of the ravines, and seeming all the more lovely from the contrast of the dark forests that covered the Sierra farther down.

It was a sunset more brilliant than common. The western sky was filled with masses of coloured clouds, in which gold and purple and cerulean blue mingled together in gorgeous magnificence; and in which the

eye of the beholder could not fail to note the outlines of strange forms, and fancy them bright and glorious beings of another world. It was a picture to gladden the eye, to give joy to the heart that was sad, and make happier the happy.

It was not unobserved. Eyes were dwelling upon it—beautiful eyes; and yet there was a sadness in their look that ill accorded with the picture on which they were gazing.

But those eyes were not drawing their inspiration from the sky-painting before them. Though apparently regarding it, the thoughts which gave them expression were drawn from a far different source. The heart within was dwelling upon another object.

The owner of those eyes was a beautiful girl, or rather a fully developed woman still unmarried. She was standing upon the azotea of a noble mansion, apparently regarding the

rich sunset, while, in reality, her thoughts were busy with another theme, and one that was less pleasant to contemplate. Even the brilliant glow of the sky, reflected upon her countenance, did not dissipate the shadows that were passing over it. The clouds from within overcame the light from without. There were shadows flitting over her heart that corresponded to those that darkened her fair face.

It was a beautiful face withal, and a beautiful form — tall, majestic, of soft graces and waving outlines. The lady was Catalina de Cruces.

She was alone upon the azotea — surrounded only by the plants and flowers. Bending over the low parapet, that overlooked the garden to the rear, she at the same time faced toward the sinking orb,— for the garden extended westward.

Now and then her eyes were lifted to the sky and the sun; but oftener they sought the shaded coppice of wild china trees at the bottom of the enclosure, through whose slender trunks gleamed the silvery surface of the stream. Upon this spot they rested from time to time, with an expression of strange interest. No wonder that to those eyes that was an interesting spot—it was that where love's first vows had been uttered in her delighted ear—it had been consecrated by a kiss, and in her thoughts it was hallowed from the "earth's profound" to the high heaven above her. No wonder she regarded it as the fairest on earth. The most famed gardens of the world—even Paradise itself—in her imagination, had no spot so sweet, no nook so shady, as the little arbour she had herself trained amid the foliage of those wild china trees.

Why was she regarding it with a look of sadness? In that very arbour, and on that very night, did she expect to meet him—the one who had rendered it sacred. Why then was she sad? Such a prospect should have rendered her countenance radiant with joy.

And so was it, at intervals, when this thought came into her mind; but there was another—some other thought—that brought those clouds upon her brow, and imparted that air of uneasy apprehension. What was that thought?

In her hand she held a bandolon. She flung herself upon a bench, and began to play some old Spanish air. The effort was too much for her. Her thoughts wandered from the melody and her fingers from the strings.

She laid down the instrument, and, again rising to her feet, paced backwards and forwards upon the azotea. Her walk was

irregular. At intervals she stopped, and, lowering her eyes, seemed to think intently on something that was absent. Then she would start forward, and stop again in the same manner as before. This she repeated several times, without uttering either word or exclamation.

Once she continued her walk all around the azotea, casting a scrutinising look among the plants and flower-pots on both sides, as if in search of something; but whatever it was, she was unsuccessful, as nothing appeared to arrest her attention.

She returned once more, and took up the bandolon. But her fingers had hardly touched the strings, before she laid the instrument down again, and rose from the bench, as if some sudden resolution had taken possession of her.

"I never thought of that—I may have

dropped it in the garden!" she muttered to herself, as she glided toward a small escalera that led down into the patio.

From this point an avenue communicated with the garden; and the next moment she had passed through this and was tripping over the sanded walks, bending from side to side, and peeping behind every plant and bush that could have concealed the object of her search.

She explored every part of the enclosure, and lingered a moment in the arbour among the china-trees—as if she enjoyed that spot more than any other—but she came back at length with the same anxious expression, that told she was not rewarded by the recovery of whatever she had lost.

The lady once more returned to the azotea —once more took up the bandolon; but after a few touches of the strings, laid it down, and again rose to her feet. Again she soliloquised.

"*Carrambo!* it is very strange!—neither in my chamber—the sala, the cuarto, the azotea, the garden!—where can it be? O Dios! if it should fall into the hands of papa! It is too intelligible—it could not fail to be understood—no—no—no! O Dios! if it should reach other hands!—those of *his* enemies! It names to-night—true, it it does not tell the place, but the time is mentioned—the place would be easily discovered. Oh! that I knew where to communicate with him! But I know not, and he will come. *Ay de mi!* it cannot be prevented now. I must hope no enemy has got it. But where can it be? Madre de Dios! where can it be?"

All these phrases were uttered in a tone and emphasis that showed the concern of the speaker at the loss of some object that greatly interested her. That object was no

other than the note brought by Josefa, and written by Carlos the cibolero, in which the assignation for that night had been appointed. No wonder she was uneasy at its loss! The wording not only compromised herself, but placed the life of her lover in extreme peril. This it was that was casting the dark shadows over her countenance—this it was that was causing her to traverse the azotea and the garden in such anxious search.

"I must ask Vicenza," she continued. "I like not to do it, for I have lost confidence in her of late. Something has changed this girl. She used to be frank and honest, but now she has grown false and hypocritical. Twice have I detected her in the act of deceiving me. What does it mean?"

She paused a moment as if in thought. "I must ask her notwithstanding. She may have found the paper, and not deeming it of

any use, may have thrown it in the fire. Fortunately she does not read, but she has to do with others who can. Ha! I forgot her soldier sweetheart! If she should have found it, and shown it to him! *Dios de mi alma!*"

This supposition seemed a painful one, for it caused the lady's heart to beat louder, and her breathing became short and quick.

"That would be terrible!" she continued, —"that would be the very worst thing that could happen. I do not like that soldier—he appears mean and cunning, and I have heard is a bad fellow, though favoured by the Commandante. God forefend he should have gotten this paper! I shall lose no more time. I shall call Vicenza, and question her."

She stepped forward to the parapet that overlooked the patio.

"Vicenza!—Vicenza!"

"*Aqui, Señorita,*" answered a voice from the interior of the house.

"*Ven aca!—Ven aca!*" (Come hither.)

"*Si, Señorita.*"

"*Anda! Anda!*" (Quickly.)

A girl, in short bright-coloured nagua, and white chemisette without sleeves, came out into the patio, and climbed up the escalera that led to the roof.

She was a *mestiza,* or half-blood, of Indian and Spanish mixture, as her brownish-white skin testified. She was not ill-looking; but there was an expression upon her countenance that precluded the idea of either virtue, honesty, or amiability. It was a mixed expression of malice and cunning. Her manner, too, was bold and offensive, like that of one who had been guilty of some known crime, and had become reckless. It was only of late she had assumed that tone, and her

mistress had observed it among other changes.

"Que quieres V., Señorita? (What want you, my lady?)"

"Vicenza, I have lost a small piece of paper. It was folded in an oblong shape—not like a letter, but this."

Here a piece of paper, similarly put up, was held out for the inspection of the girl.

"Have you seen anything of it?"

"No, Señorita," was the prompt and ready answer.

"Perhaps you may have swept it out, or thrown it into the fire? It looked insignificant, and, indeed, was not of much importance, but there were some patterns upon it I wished to copy. Do you think it has been destroyed?"

"I know not that, Señorita. I know that *I* did not destroy it. *I neither swept it out nor*

*threw it into the fire?* I should not do that with any paper, as I cannot read myself, and might destroy something that was valuable."

Whatever truth there was in the last part of her harangue, the mestiza knew that its earlier declarations were true enough. She had not destroyed it, either by sweeping out or burning.

Her answer was delivered with an ingenuous *naïveté*, accompanied with a slight accent of anger, as though she was not overpleased at being suspected of negligence.

Whether her mistress noticed the latter did not appear from her answer, but she expressed herself satisfied.

"It is of no consequence, then," said she. "You may go, Vicenza."

The girl walked off, looking sulky. When her head was just disappearing below the top of the escalera, her face was towards her

mistress, whose back was now turned to her. A scornful pouting of the lips, accompanied by a demoniac smile, was visible upon it. It was evident from that look that she knew something more of the lost paper than was admitted in her late declaration.

Catalina's gaze was once more turned upon the setting sun. In a few minutes he would disappear behind the snowy ridge of the mountain. Then a few hours, and then —— moments of bliss!

* * * * *

Roblado was seated in his cuartel as before. As before, a tiny knock sounded upon the door. As before, he called out, "Quien es!" and was answered, "Yo!" and, as before, he recognised the voice and gave the order for its owner to enter. As before, it was the soldier José, who, in a

cringing voice and with a cringing salute, approached his officer.

"Well, José, what news?"

"Only this," replied the soldier, holding out a slip of paper folded into an oblong shape.

"What is it?" demanded Roblado. "Who is it from?" in the same breath.

"The captain will understand it better than I can, as I can't read; but it comes from the Señorita, and looks inside like a letter. The Señorita got it from somebody at church yesterday morning: so thinks Vicenza, for she saw her read it as soon as she got back from morning prayers. Vicenza thinks that the girl Josefa brought it up the valley, but the captain most likely can tell for himself."

Roblado had not listened to half of this talk; but had instead been swallowing the

contents of the paper. As soon as he had got to the end of it he sprang from his chair as if a needle had been stuck into him, and paced the room in great agitation.

"Quick! quick, José!" he exclaimed. "Send Gomez here. Say nothing to any one. Hold yourself in readiness—I shall want you, too. Send Gomez instantly. *Vaya!*"

The soldier made a salute less cringing because more hurried, and precipitately retired from the apartment.

Roblado continued,—

"By heaven! this is a piece of luck! Who ever failed to catch a fool when love was his lure? This very night, too, and at midnight! I shall have time to prepare. Oh! if I but knew the place! 'Tis not given here."

Again he read over the note.

"Carajo, no! that is unfortunate. What's to be done? I must not go guessing in the

dark! Ha! I have it! *She* shall be watched! —watched to the very spot! Vicenza can do that while we lie somewhere in ambush. The girl can bring us to it. We shall have time to surround them. Their interview will last long enough for that. We shall take them in the very moment of their bliss. Hell and furies! to think of it—this low dog—this butcher of buffaloes — to thwart me in my purposes! But patience, Roblado! patience! to-night—to-night! ——"

A knocking at the door. Sergeant Gomez was admitted.

"Gomez, get ready twenty of your men! picked fellows, do you hear? Be ready by eleven o'clock. You have ample time, but see that you be ready the moment I call you. Not a word to any one without. Let the men saddle up and be quiet about it. Load your carbines. There's work for you. You

shall know what it is by and by. Go! get ready!"

Without saying a word, the sergeant went off to obey the order.

"Curses on the luck! if I but knew the place, or anything near it. Would it be about the house? or in the garden? Maybe outside—in the country somewhere? That is not unlikely. He would hardly venture so near the town, lest some one might recognise him or his horse. Death to that horse! No, no! I shall have that horse yet, or I much mistake. Oh! if I could find this place before the hour of meeting, then my game were sure. But no, nothing said of the place—yes, the *old* place. Hell and furies! they have met before—often—often—oh!"

A groan of agony broke from the speaker, and he paced to and fro like one bereft of his senses.

"Shall I tell Vizcarra now," he continued, "or wait till it is over? I shall wait. It will be a dainty bit of news along with supper. Perhaps I may garnish the table with the ears of the cibolero. Ha! ha! ha!"

And uttering a diabolical laugh, the ruffian took down his sabre and buckled the belt around his waist. He then armed himself with a pair of heavy pistols; and, after looking to the straps of his spurs, strode out of the room.

## CHAPTER XVII.

It wanted but an hour of midnight. There was a moon in the sky, but so near the horizon, that the bluff bounding the southern side of the valley threw out a shadow to the distance of many yards upon the plain.

Parallel to the line of the cliffs, and close in to their base, a horseman could be seen advancing up the valley from the lower end of the settlement. His cautious pace, and the anxious glances which he at intervals cast before him, showed that he was travelling with some apprehension, and was desirous of remaining unseen. It was evident, too, that this was his

object in keeping within the shadow of the cliff; for on arriving at certain points where the precipice became slanting and cast no shadow, he would halt for a while, and, after carefully reconnoitring the ground, pass rapidly over it. Concealment could be his only object in thus closely hugging the bluffs, for a much better road could have been found at a little distance out from them.

After travelling for many miles in this way, the horseman at length arrived opposite the town, which still, however, was three miles distant from the cliff. From this point a road led off to the town, communicating between it and a pass up the bluffs to the left.

The horseman halted, and gazed awhile along the road, as if undecided whether to take it or not. Having resolved in the nega-

tive, he moved on, and rode nearly a mile farther under the shadow of the bluffs. Again he halted, and scanned the country to his right. A bridle-path seemed to run in the direction of the town, or towards a point somewhat above it. After a short examination the horseman seemed to recognise this path as one he was in search of, and, heading his horse into it, he parted from the shadow of the bluffs, and rode out under the full moonlight. This, shining down upon him, showed a young man of fine proportions, dressed in ranchero costume, and mounted upon a noble steed, whose sleek black coat glittered under the silvery light. It was easy to know the rider. His bright complexion and light-coloured hair curling thickly under the brim of his sombrero, were characteristics not to be mistaken in that land of dark faces.

He was Carlos the cibolero. It could be seen now that a large wolf-like dog trotted near the heels of the horse. That dog was Cibolo.

Advancing in the direction of the town, the caution of the horseman seemed to increase.

The country before him was not quite open. It was level; but fortunately for him, its surface was studded with copse-like islands of timber, and here and there straggling patches of chapparal through which the path led. Before entering these the dog preceded him, but without noise or bark; and when emerging into the open plain again, the horseman each time halted and scanned the ground that separated him from the next copse, before attempting to pass over it.

Proceeding in this way, he arrived at length within several hundred yards of the outskirts of the town, and could see the walls,

with the church cupola shining over the tops of the trees. One line of wall on which his eyes were fixed lay nearer than the rest. He recognised its outline. It was the parapet over the house of Don Ambrosio—in the rear of which he had now arrived.

He halted in a small copse of timber, the last upon the plain. Beyond, in the direction of Don Ambrosio's house, the ground was open and level up to the bank of the stream—already described as running along the bottom of the garden. The tract was a meadow belonging to Don Ambrosio, and used for pasturing the horses of his establishment. It was accessible to these, by means of a rude bridge that crossed the stream outside the walls of the garden. Another bridge, however, joined the garden itself to the meadow. This was much slighter and of neater construction—intended only for

foot-passengers. It was, in fact, a mere private bridge, by which the fair daughter of Don Ambrosio could cross to enjoy her walk in the pleasant meadow beyond. Upon this little bridge, at its middle part, was a gate with lock and key, to keep intruders from entering the precincts of the garden.

This bridge was not over three hundred yards from the copse in which Carlos had halted, and nothing intervened but the darkness to prevent him from having a view of it. However, as the moon was still up, he could distinctly see the tall posterns, and light-coloured palings of the gate, glimmering in her light. The stream he could not see—as at this point it ran between high banks—and the garden itself was hidden from view by the grove of cotton-woods and china-trees growing along its bottom.

After arriving in the copse, Carlos dis-

mounted; and having led his horse into the darkest shadow of the trees, there left him. He did not tie him to anything, but merely rested the bridle over the pommel of the saddle, so that it might not draggle upon the ground. He had long ago trained the noble animal to remain where he was placed without other fastening than this.

This arrangement completed, he walked forward to the edge of the underwood, and there stood, with his eyes fixed upon the bridge and the dark grove beyond it. It was not the first time for him to go through all the manœuvres here described—no, not by many—but, perhaps, on no other occasion were his emotions so strong and strange as on the present.

He had prepared himself for the interview he was now expecting—he had promised himself a frankness of speech, his modesty had never

before permitted him to indulge in—he had resolved on proposals—the rejection or acceptance of which might determine his future fate. His heart beat within his breast so as to be audible to his own ears.

* * * * *

Perfect stillness reigned through the town. The inhabitants had all retired to their beds, and not a light appeared from door or window. All were close shut and fast bolted. No one appeared in the streets, except the half-dozen "serenos" who formed the night-watch of the place. These could be seen muffled up in their dark cloaks, sitting half asleep on the banquetas of houses, and grasping in one hand their huge halberds, while their lanthorns rested upon the pavement at their feet.

Perfect stillness reigned around the mansion of Don Ambrosio. The great gate of

the zaguan was closed and barred, and the portero had retired within his "lodge," thus signifying that all the inmates of the dwelling had returned home. If silence denoted sleep, all were asleep; but a ray of light escaping through the silken curtains of a glass door, and falling dimly upon the pavement of the patio, showed that one at least still kept vigil. That light proceeded from the chamber of Catalina.

All at once the stillness of the night was broken by the loud tolling of a bell. It was the clock of the paroquia announcing the hour of midnight.

The last stroke had not ceased to reverberate, when the light in the chamber appeared to be suddenly extinguished—for it no longer glowed through the curtain.

Shortly after, the glass door was silently opened from the inside; and a female form

closely muffled came forth, and glided with stealthy and sinuous step around the shadowy side of the patio. The tall elegant figure could not be hidden by the disguise of the ample cloak in which it was muffled, and the graceful gait appeared even when constrained and stealthy. It was the Señorita herself.

Having passed round the patio, she entered the avenue that led to the garden. Here a heavy door barred the egress from the house, and before this she stopped. Only a moment. A key appeared from under her cloak, and the large bolt with some difficulty yielded to her woman's strength. It did not yield silently. The rusty iron sounded as it sprang back into the lock, causing her to start and tremble. She even returned back through the avenue, to make sure whether any one had heard it; and, standing in the

dark entrance, glanced round the patio. Had she not heard a door closing as she came back? She fancied so; and alarmed by it, she stood for some time gazing upon the different doors that opened upon the court. They were all close shut, her own not excepted, for she had closed it on coming out. Still her fancy troubled her, and, but half satisfied, she returned to the gate.

This she opened with caution, and passing through, traversed the rest of the avenue, and came out in the open ground. Keeping under the shadow of the trees and shrubbery, she soon reached the grove at the bottom of the garden. Here she paused for a moment, and, looking through the stems of the trees, scanned the open surface in the direction of the copse where Carlos had halted.

No object was visible but the outlines of the timber island itself, under whose

shadow a human form in dark clothing could not have been recognised at such a distance.

After pausing a moment, she glided among the trees of the grove, and the next moment stood upon the centre and highest point of the bridge in front of the little gate. Here she again stopped, drew from under her cloak a white cambric handkerchief, and raising herself to her full height, held it spread out between her hands.

The air was filled with fire-flies, whose lights sparkled thickly against the dark background of the copsewood; but these did not prevent her from distinguishing a brighter flash, like the snapping of a lucifer-match, that appeared among them. Her signal was answered!

She lowered the handkerchief, and, taking out a small key, applied it to the lock of the

gate. This was undone in a second, and, having thrown open the wicket, she retired within the shadow of the grove, and stood waiting.

Even in that dark shadow her eyes sparkled with the light of love, as she saw a form—the form of a man on foot, parting from the copse, and coming in the direction of the bridge. It was to her the dearest on earth; and she awaited the approach with a flushed cheek and a heart full of joyful emotion.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

It was no fancy of Catalina's that she heard the shutting of a door as she returned up the avenue. A door in reality had been closed at that moment,—the door that led to the sleeping apartments of the maid-servants. Had her steps been quicker, she might have seen some one rush across the patio and enter this door. But she arrived too late for this. The door was closed, and all was silent again. It might have been fancy, thought she.

It was no fancy. From the hour when the family had retired to rest, the door of Catalina's chamber had been watched. An

eye had been bent all the time upon that ray of light escaping through the curtained glass,—the eye of the girl Vicenza.

During the early part of the evening the maid had asked leave to go out for a while. It had been granted. She had been gone for nearly an hour. Conducted by the soldier José, she had had an interview with Roblado. At that interview all had been arranged between them.

She was to watch her mistress from the house, and follow her to the place of assignation. When that should be determined she was to return with all haste to Roblado, —who appointed a place of meeting her— and then guide him and his troop to the lovers. This, thought Roblado, would be the surest plan to proceed upon. He had taken his measures accordingly.

The door of the maid's sleeping-room

was just opposite that of Catalina's chamber. Through the keyhole the girl had seen the light go out, and the Señorita gliding around the patio. She had watched her into the avenue, and then gently opening her own door had stolen after.

At the moment the Señorita had succeeded in unlocking the great gate of the garden, the mestiza was peeping around the wall at the entrance of the avenue; but on hearing the other return,—for it was by the sound of her footsteps she was warned,—the wily spy had darted back into her room, and closed the door behind her.

It was some time before she dared venture out again, as the keyhole no longer did her any service. She kept her eye to it, however, and, seeing that her mistress did not return to her chamber, she concluded that the latter had continued on into the garden. Again

gently opening her door, she stole forth, and on tiptoe approaching the avenue, peeped into it. It was no longer dark. The gate was open, and the moon shining in lit up the whole passage. · It was evident, therefore, that the Señorita had gone through, and was now in the garden.

Was she in the garden? The mestiza remembered the bridge, and knew that her mistress carried the key of the wicket, and often used it both by day and night. She might by this have crossed the bridge, and got far beyond into the open country. She — the spy — might not find the direction she had taken, and thus spoil the whole plan!

With these thoughts passing through her mind, the girl hurried through the avenue, and crouching down, hastened along the walk as fast as she was able.

Seeing no one among the fruit-trees and flower-beds, she began to despair; but the thick grove at the bottom of the garden gave her promise—that was a likely place of meeting—capital for such a purpose, as the mestiza, experienced in such matters, well knew.

To approach the grove, however, presented a difficulty. There was a space of open ground—a green parterre—between it and the flower-beds. Any one, already in the grove, could perceive the approach of another in that direction, and especially under a bright moonlight. This the mestiza saw, and it compelled her to pause and reflect how she was to get nearer.

But one chance seemed to offer. The high adobe wall threw a shadow of some feet along one side of the open ground. In this shadow it might be possible to reach the

timber unobserved. The girl resolved to attempt it.

Guided by the instinctive cunning of her race, she dropped down flat upon her breast; and dragging herself over the grass, she reached the selvidge of the grove, just in the rear of the arbour. There she paused, raised her head, and glanced through the leafy screen that encircled the arbour. She saw what she desired.

Catalina was at this moment upon the bridge, and above the position of the mestiza —so that the latter could perceive her form outlined against the blue of the sky. She saw her hold aloft the white kerchief. She guessed that it was a signal—she saw the flash in answer to it, and then observed her mistress undo the lock and fling the wicket open.

The cunning spy was now sure that the

place of meeting was to be the grove itself, and might have returned with that information; but Roblado had distinctly ordered her not to leave until she saw the meeting itself, and was certain of the spot. She therefore remained where she was, and awaited the further proceedings of the lovers.

Carlos, on perceiving the signal, had answered it by flashing some powder already prepared. He lost no time in obeying the well-known summons. A single moment by the side of his horse—a whisper which the latter well understood, and he parted from the copse; Cibolo following at his heels.

On reaching the end of the bridge, he bent down; and, addressing some words in a low voice to the dog, proceeded to cross over. The animal did not follow him, but lay down on the opposite bank of the stream.

The next moment the lovers were together.

From the spot where she lay the mestiza witnessed their greeting. The moon shone upon their faces—the fair skin and curly locks of Carlos were distinctly visible under the light. The girl knew the cibolero—it was he.

She had seen all that was necessary for Roblado to know. The grove was the place of meeting. It only remained for her to get back to the officer, and give the information.

She was about to crawl away, and had already half risen, when, to her dismay, the lovers appeared coming through the grove and towards the very arbour behind which she lay!

Their faces were turned towards the spot where she was crouching. If she rose to her

feet, or attempted to go off, she could not fail to be seen by one or other of them.

She had no alternative but to remain where she was—at least until some better opportunity offered of getting away—and with this intention she again squatted down close under the shadow of the arbour.

A moment after the lovers entered, and seated themselves upon the benches with which the little bower was provided.

## CHAPTER XIX.

The hearts of both were so agitated that for some moments neither gave utterance to their thoughts. Catalina was the first to speak.

"Your sister?" she inquired.

"She is better. I have had the rancho restored. They have returned to it, and the old scenes seem to have worked a miracle upon her. Her senses came at once, and relapse only at long intervals. I have hopes it will be all well again."

"I am glad to hear this. Poor child! she must have suffered sadly in the hands of these rude savages."

"Rude savages! Ay, Catalina, you have

styled them appropriately, though you little know of whom you are speaking."

"Of whom?" echoed the lady in surprise. Up to this moment even she had no other than the popular and universal belief that Carlos' sister had been a captive in the hands of the Indians!

"It was partly for this that I have sought an interview to-night. I could not exist without explaining to *you* my late conduct, which must have appeared to you a mystery. It shall be so no longer. Hear me, Catalina!"

Carlos revealed the horrid plot, detailing every circumstance, to the utter astonishment of his fair companion.

"Oh! fiends! fiends!" she exclaimed, "who could have imagined such atrocity? Who would suppose that on the earth were wretches like these? But that *you*, dear Carlos, have told me, I could not have believed

in such villany! I knew that both were bad; I have heard many a tale of the vileness of these two men; but this is wickedness beyond the power of fancy! *Santissima Madre!* what men! what monsters! It is incredible!"

"You know now with what justice I am called a murderer?"

"Oh, dear Carlos! think not of that. I never gave it a thought. I knew you had some cause just and good. Fear not! The world shall yet know all——"

"The world," interrupted Carlos, with a sneer. "For me there is no world. I have no home. Even among those with whom I have been brought up, I have been but a stranger — a heretic outcast. Now I am worse—a hunted outlaw with a price upon my head, and a good large one too. In truth, I never thought I was worth so much before!"

Here a laugh escaped from the speaker; but his merriment was of short duration. He continued,—

"No world have I but you, Catalina,—and you no longer except in my heart. I must leave you and go far away. Death—worse than death—awaits me here. I must go hence. I must return to the people from whom my parents are sprung—to our long-forgotten kindred. Perhaps there I may find a new home and new friends, but happiness I cannot without you—No, never!"

Catalina was silent, with tearful eyes bent upon the ground. She trembled at the thought that was passing in her mind. She feared to give it expression. But it was no time for the affectation of false modesty, for idle bashfulness; and neither were her characteristics. Upon a single word depended the happiness of her life—of her lover's.

Away with womanly coyness! let the thought be spoken!

She turned toward her lover, took his hand in hers, leant forward till her lips were close to his, and looking in his face, said in a soft, but firm voice,—

"Carlos! is it your wish that *I* go with you?"

In a moment his arms were around her, and their lips had met.

"O heavens!" he exclaimed; "is this possible? do I hear aright? Dearest Catalina! it was this I would have proposed, but I dared not do it. I feared to make the proposal, so wild does it seem. What! forsake all for me? Oh, *querida! querida!* Tell me that this is what your words mean! Say you will go with me!"

"*I will!*" was the short, but firm reply.

"O God! I am too happy—a week of

terrible suffering, and I am again happy. But a week ago, Catalina, and I was happy. I had met with a strange adventure, one that promised fortune. I was full of hope—hope of winning you; not you, *querida*, but your father. Of winning him by gold. See!" Here the speaker held forth his hand filled with shining ore. "It is gold. Of this I have discovered a mine, and I had hoped with it to have rivalled your father in his wealth, and then to have won his consent. Alas! alas! that is now hopeless, but your words have given me new happiness. Think not of the fortune you leave behind. I know you do not, dear Catalina. I shall give you one equal to it—perhaps far greater. I know where this precious trash is to be procured, but I shall tell you all when we have time. To-night——"

He was interrupted by Catalina. Her

quick ear had caught a sound that appeared odd to her. It was but a slight rustling among the leaves near the back of the arbour, and might have been caused by the wind, had there been any. But not a breath was stirring. Something else had caused it. What could it be?

After a moment or two both stepped out, and examined the bushes whence the sound was supposed to have proceeded; but nothing was to be seen. They looked around and up towards the garden—there was no appearance of anything that could have caused the noise! It was now much darker than when they had entered the arbour. The moon had gone down, and the silvery light had turned to grey; but it was still clear enough to have distinguished any large object at several yards distance. Catalina could not be mistaken. She had heard a rustling sound to a certainty.

Could it have been the dog? Carlos stepped forward on the bridge. It was not—the animal still lay where he had been placed: it could not have been he! What then? Some lizard? perhaps a dangerous serpent?

At all events they would not again enter the arbour, but remained standing outside. Still Catalina was not without apprehensions, for she now remembered the loss of the note, and, later still, the shutting of the door; both of which she hastily communicated to her companion.

Hitherto Carlos had paid but little attention to what he believed to be some natural occurrence—the fluttering of a bird which had been disturbed by them, or the gliding of a snake or lizard. But the information now given made a different impression upon him. Used to Indian wiles, he was a

ready reasoner, and he perceived at once that there might be something sinister in the sound which had been heard. He resolved, therefore, to examine the ground more carefully.

Once more he proceeded to the back of the arbour, and dropping to his knees, scanned the grass and bushes. In a moment he raised his head with an exclamation of surprise.

"As I live, Catalina, you were right! Some one has been here, beyond a doubt! Some one has lain on this very spot! Where can they have gone too? By heaven, it was a woman! Here is the trail of her dress!"

"Vicenza!" exclaimed the lady. "It can be no other—my maid, Vicenza! *Dios de mi alma!* she has heard every word!"

"No doubt it was Vicenza. She has

watched and followed you from the house. What could have tempted her to such an act?"

"*Ay de mi!* Heaven only knows: her conduct has been very strange of late. It is quite annoying! Dear Carlos!" she continued, changing her tone of regret to one of anxiety, "you must stay no longer. Who knows what she may do? Perhaps summon my father! Perhaps still worse—Santissima Virgen! may it not be!"

Here Catalina hastily communicated the fact of Vicenza's intimacy with the soldier José, as well as other circumstances relating to the girl, and urged upon her lover the necessity of instant departure.

"I shall go, then," said he. "Not that I much fear them; it is too dark for their carbines, and their sabres will never reach me, while my brave steed stands yonder ready

to obey my call. But it is better for me to go. There may be something in it. I cannot explain curiosity that attempts so much as this girl. I shall go at once then."

And so Carlos had resolved. But much remained to be said: fresh vows of love to be pronounced; an hour to be fixed for a future meeting — perhaps the last before taking the final step — their flight across the great plains.

More than once had Carlos placed his foot upon the bridge, and more than once had he returned to have another sweet word — another parting kiss.

The final "adios" had at length been exchanged, the lovers had parted from each other; Catalina had turned towards the house; and Carlos was advancing to the bridge with the intention of crossing, when a growl from Cibolo caused him to halt and listen!

Again the dog growled, this time more fiercely, following with a series of earnest barks, that told his master some danger was nigh!

The first thought of the latter was to rush across the bridge, and make towards his steed. Had he done so, he would have had time enough to escape; but the desire to warn her, so that she might hasten to the house, impelled him to turn back through the grove. She had already reached the open parterre, and was crossing it, when the barking of the dog caused her to stop, and the moment after Carlos came up. But he had not addressed a word to her before the trampling of horses sounded outside the adobe walls of the garden — horsemen galloped down on both sides, while the confused striking of hoofs showed that some were halting outside, while others deployed around the enclosure. The

rattling of the timbers of the large bridge was heard almost at the same instant; then the dog breaking into a fierce attack; and then, through the stems of the trees, the dark forms of horsemen became visible upon the opposite bank of the stream. The garden was surrounded!

## CHAPTER XX.

Long after the lovers had entered the arbour, the mestiza had remained in her squatting attitude; listening to the conversation, of which not a word escaped her. It was not, however, her interest in that which bound her to the spot, but her fear of being discovered should she attempt to leave it. She had reason while it was still moonlight, for the open ground she must pass over was distinctly visible from the arbour. It was only after the moon went down that she saw the prospect of retiring unseen; and, choosing a moment when the lovers had their faces turned from her, she crawled a few yards

back, rose to her feet, and ran nimbly off in the darkness.

Strange to say, the rustling heard by the Señorita was not made by the girl at the moment of her leaving the arbour. It was caused by a twig which she had bent behind a branch, the better to conceal herself, and this releasing itself had sprung back to its place. That was why no object was visible to the lovers although coming hastily out of the arbour. The spy at that instant was beyond the reach of sight as well as hearing. She had got through the avenue before the twig moved.

She did not stop for a moment. She did not return to her apartment, but crossing the patio hastily entered the zaguan. This she traversed with stealthy steps, as if afraid to awake the portero.

On reaching the gate, she drew from her pocket a key. It was not the key of the

main lock, but of the lesser one, belonging to the postern door which opened through the great gate.

This key she had secured at an earlier hour of the evening, for the very use she was now about to make of it.

She placed it in the lock, and then shot the bolt, using all the care she could to prevent it from making a noise. She raised the latch with like caution; and then, opening the door, stepped gently to the outside. She next closed the door after her, slowly and silently; and this done, she ran with all her speed along the road towards some woods that were outside the town, and not far from the house of Don Ambrosio.

It was in these woods that Roblado held his men in ambush. He had brought them thither at a late hour, and by a circuitous route, so that no one should see them as they

entered the timber, and thus prevent the possibility of a frustration of his plans. Here he was waiting the arrival of his spy.

The girl soon reached the spot, and in a few minutes detailed to the officer the whole of what she had witnessed. What she had *heard* there was no time to tell, for she communicated to Roblado how she had been detained, and the latter saw there was not a moment to be lost. The interview might end before he should be ready, and his prey might still escape him.

Had Roblado felt more confidence as to time he would now have acted differently. He would have sent some men by a lower crossing, and let them approach the bottom of the garden directly from the meadow; he would, moreover, have spent more time and caution about the "surround."

But he saw he might be too late, should

he adopt this surer course. A quicker one recommended itself, and he at once gave the orders to his followers. These were divided into two parties of different sizes. Each was to take a side of the garden, and deploy along the wall, but the larger party was to drop only a few of its men, while the rest were to ride hastily over the greater bridge, and gallop round to the bottom of the garden. Roblado himself was to lead this party, whose duty would likely be of most importance. As the leader well knew, the garden walls could not be scaled without a ladder, and the cibolero, if found within the garden, would attempt to escape by the bridge at the bottom. Lest he might endeavour to get through the avenue and off by the front of the house, the girl Vicenza was to conduct Gomez with several men on foot through the patio, and guide them to the avenue entrance.

The plan was well enough conceived. Roblado knew the ground well. He had often strolled through that garden, and its walls and approaches were perfectly familiar to him. Should he be enabled to surround it, before the cibolero could get notice of their approach, he was sure of his victim. The latter must either be killed or captured.

In five minutes after the arrival of the spy, he had communicated the whole of their duties to the men; and in five minutes more they had ridden out of the woods, crossed the small tract that separated them from the house, and were in the act of surrounding the garden! It was at this moment that the dog Cibolo first uttered his growl of alarm.

"Fly—fly!" cried Catalina as she saw her lover approach. "Oh! do not think of me! They dare not take my life. I have

committed no offence. Oh, Carlos, leave me! fly! *Madre de Dios!* they come this way!"

As she spoke a number of dark forms were seen entering from the avenue, and coming down the garden. Their scabbards clanked among the bushes as they rushed through them. They were soldiers on foot! Several remained by the entrance, while the rest ran forward.

Carlos had for a moment contemplated escape in that direction. It occurred to him, if he could get up to the house and on the azotea, he might drop off on either side, and, favoured by the darkness, return to the meadow at some distant point. This idea vanished the moment he saw that the entrance was occupied. He glanced to the walls. They were too high to be scaled. He would be attacked while attempting it. No other chance offered but to cut his way

through by the bridge. He now saw the error he had committed in returning. She was in no danger—at least in no peril of her life. Indeed her greater danger would arise from his remaining near her. He should have crossed the bridge at first. He was now separated from his horse. He might summon the latter by his call—he knew that—but it would only bring the noble animal within reach of his foes—perhaps to be captured. That would be as much as taking his own life. No; he could not summon his steed from where he was, and he did not utter the signal. What was he to do? To remain by the side of Catalina, to be surrounded and captured, perhaps cut down like a dog! To imperil her life as well!—No. He must make a desperate struggle to get out of the enclosure, to reach the open country if possible, and then——

His thoughts went no farther. He cried out,—

"Querida, farewell! I must leave you—do not despair. If I die, I shall carry your love to heaven! Farewell, farewell!"

These words were uttered in the parting haste of the moment, and he had sprung away so suddenly, that he did not hear the answering farewell.

The moment he was gone the lady dropped to her knees, and with hands clasped, and eyes raised to heaven, offered her prayer for his safety.

Half-a-dozen springs brought Carlos once more under the shadow of the grove. He saw his foes on the opposite bank, and from their voices he could tell there were many of them. They were talking loudly and shouting directions to one another. He could distinguish the voice of Roblado

above the rest. He was calling upon some of the men to dismount and follow him over the bridge. He was himself on foot, for the purpose of crossing.

Carlos saw no other prospect of escape than by making a quick rush across the bridge, and cutting his way through the crowd. By that means he might reach the open plain, and fight his way until his horse could come up. Once in the saddle he would have laughed at their attempts to take him. It was a desperate resolve,—a perilous running of the gauntlet,—almost certain death—but still more certain death was the alternative if he remained where he was.

There was no time for hesitation. Already several men had dismounted, and were making towards the bridge. He must cross before they had reached it, one was already upon it. He must be beaten back.

Carlos, cocking his pistol, rushed forward to the gate. The man had reached it from the other side. They met face to face, with the gate still shut between them. Carlos saw that his antagonist was Roblado himself!

Not a word was spoken between them. Roblado also had his pistol in readiness and fired first, but missed his aim. He perceived this, and dreading the fire from his adversary, he staggered back to the bank, shouting to his followers to discharge their carbines.

Before they could obey the order, the crack of the cibolero's pistol rang upon the air, and Roblado, with a loud oath, rolled down by the edge of the water. Carlos dashed open the gate, and was about to rush onward, when he perceived through the smoke and darkness several carbines brought to the level, and aimed at him. A sudden

thought came into his mind, and he changed his design of crossing the bridge. The time was but the pulling of a trigger, but, short as it was, he effected his purpose. The carbines blazed and cracked, all nearly at the same instant, and when the smoke cleared away Carlos was no longer on the bridge! Had he gone back into the garden? No—already half-a-dozen men had cut off his retreat in that direction!

"He is killed!" cried several voices, "Carajo!—he has fallen into the river! *Mira!*"

All eyes were turned upon the stream. Certainly a body had plunged into it, as the bubbles and circling waves testified, but only these were to be seen!

"He has sunk! he's gone to the bottom!" cried some.

"Be sure he hasn't swam away!"

counselled a voice; and several ran along the banks with their eyes searching the surface.

"Impossible! there are no waves."

"He could not have passed here," said one who stood a little below the bridge. "I have been watching the water."

"So I," cried another from above. "He has not passed my position."

"Then he is dead and gone down!"

"Carajo! let us fish him out!"

And they were proceeding to put this idea into execution, when Roblado, who had now got to his feet, and finding that a wounded arm was all he had suffered, ordered them to desist.

"Up and down!" he thundered; "scatter both ways—quick, or he may yet escape us. Go!"

The men did as they were ordered, but

the party who turned down-stream halted through sheer surprise. The figure of a man was seen, in a bent attitude and crawling up the bank, at the distance of a hundred yards below. The next moment it rose into an erect position, and glided over the plain with lightning speed, in the direction of the copse of timber!

"*Hola!*" exclaimed several voices, "yonder he goes! *Por todos santos,* it is he!"

Amidst the cracking of carbines that followed, a shrill whistle was heard; and before any of the mounted men could ride forward, a horse was seen shooting out from the copse and meeting the man upon the open meadow! Quick as thought the latter vaulted into the saddle, and after uttering a wild and scornful laugh galloped off, and soon disappeared in the darkness!

Most of the dragoons sprang upon their

horses and followed; but after a short gallop over the plain they gave up the chase, and one by one returned to their wounded leader.

To say that Roblado was furious would be to characterise very faintly the state he was in. But he had still one captive on which to vent his rage and chagrin.

Catalina had been captured in the garden, —taken while praying for the safe escape of her lover. José had remained in charge of her, while the rest rushed down to assist in the capture of Carlos, at which José, knowing the cibolero as he did, and not being over brave, evinced no desire to be present.

Catalina heard the shots and shouts that denoted the terrible struggle. She had heard, too, the shrill whistle and the scornful laugh that rang loudly above the din. She had

heard the shouts of the pursuers dying away in the distance.

Her heart beat with joy. She knew that her lover was free!

She thought then, and then only, of herself. She thought, too, of escape. She knew the rude taunts she would have to listen to from the brutal leader of these miscreants. What could she do to avoid an encounter? She had but one to deal with—José. She knew the despicable character of the man. Would gold tempt him? She would make the trial.

It was made, and succeeded. The large sum offered was irresistible. The villain knew that there could be no great punishment for letting go a captive who could at any time be taken again. He would risk the chances of his captain's displeasure for

such a sum. His captain might have reasons for not dealing too severely with him. The purse was paid, and the lady was allowed to go.

She was to close the door, locking it from the inside, as though she had escaped by flight; and this direction of José was followed to the letter.

As Roblado crossed the bridge he was met by the soldier, who, breathless and stammering, announced that the fair prisoner had got into the house. She had slipped from his side and ran off. Had it been an ordinary captive, he could have fired upon her; but he was unable to overtake her until she had passed the door, which was closed and locked before he could get near!

For a moment Roblado hesitated whether to "storm the house." His rage almost induced him to the act. He reflected, however, that

the proceeding might appear somewhat ridiculous and could not much better his position; besides, the pain of his wounded arm admonished him to retire from the field.

He recrossed the bridge, was helped upon his horse, and, summoning around him his valiant troop, he rode back to the Presidio —leaving the roused town to conjecture the cause of the alarm.

## CHAPTER XXI.

Next morning the town was full of "novedades." At first it was supposed there had been an attack of Indians repelled as usual by the troops. What valiant protectors the people had!

After a while it was rumoured that Carlos the murderer had been captured, and that was the cause of the firing,—that Captain Roblado was killed in the affair. Presently Carlos was not taken, but he had been chased *and came very near* being taken! Roblado had engaged him singly, hand to hand, and had wounded him, but in the darkness he had got off by diving down the river. In

the encounter the outlaw had shot the captain through the arm, which prevented the latter from making him a prisoner.

This rumour came direct from the Presidio. It was partly true. The wounding of Carlos by Roblado was an addition to the truth, intended to give a little *éclat* to the latter, for it became known afterwards that the cibolero had escaped without even a scratch.

People wondered why the outlaw should have ventured to approach the town, knowing as he did that there was a price upon his head. Some very powerful motive must have drawn him thither. The motive soon became known,—the whole story leaked out; and then, indeed, did scandal enjoy a feast. Catalina had been for some time the acknowledged belle of the place, and, what with envious women and jealous men, she

was now treated with slight show of charity. The very blackest construction was put upon her "compromisa." It was worse even than a *mésalliance*. The "society" were horrified at her conduct in stooping to intimacy with a "lepero;" while even the lepero class, itself fanatically religious, condemned her for her association with "un asesino," but still worse, a "heretico!"

The excitement produced by this new affair was great indeed,—a perfect panic. The cibolero's head rose in value, like the funds. The magistrates and principal men assembled in the Casa de Cabildo. A new proclamation was drawn out. A larger sum was offered for the capture of Carlos, and the document was rendered still stronger by a declaration of severe punishment to all who should give him food or protection. If captured beneath the roof of any citizen

who had voluntarily sheltered him, the latter was to suffer full confiscation of his property, besides such further punishment as might be fixed upon.

The Church was not silent. The padrés promised excommunication and the wrath of Heaven against those who would stay justice from the heretic murderer!

These were terrible terms for the outlaw! Fortunate for him, he knew how to live without a roof over his head. He could maintain existence where his enemies would have starved, and where they were unable to follow him,—on the wide desert plain, or in the rocky ravines of the mountains. Had he depended for food or shelter on his fellow-citizens of the settlement, he would soon have met with betrayal and denouncement. But the cibolero was as independent of such a necessity as the wild

savage of the prairies. He could sleep on the grassy sward or the naked rock, he could draw sustenance even from the arid surface of the Llano Estacado, and there he could bid defiance to a whole army of pursuers.

At the council Don Ambrosio was not present. Grief and rage kept him within doors. A stormy scene had been enacted between him and his daughter. Henceforth she was to be strictly guarded—to be kept a prisoner in her father's house—to be taught repentance by the exercise of penance.

To describe the feelings of Roblado and the Commandante would be impossible. These gentlemen were well-nigh at their wits' end with mortification. Disappointment, humiliation, physical and moral pain, had worked them into a frenzy of rage; and they were engaged together during all the day in plotting

schemes and plans for the capture of their outlawed enemy.

Roblado was not less earnest than the Commandante for the success of their endeavours.

Carlos had now given both of them good cause to hate him, and both hated him from the bottom of their hearts.

What vexed Roblado most was, that he was no longer able to take the field—nor was he likely to be for several weeks. His wound, though not dangerous, would oblige him to sling his arm for some time, and to manage a horse would be out of the question. The strategetic designs of the Commandante and himself would have to be carried out by those who felt far less interest in the capture of the outlaw than they did. Indeed, but for the arrival of a brace of lieutenants, sent from

division head-quarters at Santa Fé, the garrison would have been without a commissioned officer fit for duty. These new-comers — Lieutenants Yañez and Ortiga—were neither of them the men to catch the cibolero. They were brave enough—Ortiga in particular—but both were late arrivals from Spain, and knew nothing whatever of border warfare.

The soldiers were desirous of hunting the outlaw down, and acted with sufficient zeal. The stimulus of a large reward, which was promised to them, rendered them eager of effecting his capture; and they went forth on each fresh scout with alacrity. But they were not likely to attack the cibolero unless a goodly number of them were together. No one or two of them—including the celebrated Sergeant Gomez—would venture within range of his rifle, much less go near enough to lay hands upon him.

The actual experience of his prowess by some of them, and the exaggerated reports of it known to others, had made such an impression upon the whole troop, that the cibolero could have put a considerable body of them to flight only by showing himself! But in addition to the skill, strength, and daring which he had in reality exhibited—in addition to the exaggeration of those qualities by the fancy—the soldiers as well as people had become possessed with a strange belief—that was, that the cibolero was under the protection of his mother—under the protection of the "diablo"—in other words, that he was *bewitched*, and therefore invincible! Some asserted that he was impervious to shot, spear, or sabre. Those who had fired their carbines at him while on the bridge fully believed this. They were ready to swear—each one of them—that they had hit the cibolero, and must have killed

him had he not been under supernatural protection!

Wonderful stories now circulated among the soldiers and throughout the settlement. The cibolero was seen everywhere, and always mounted on his coal-black horse, who shared his supernatural fame. He had been seen riding along the top of the cliffs at full gallop, and so close to their edge that he might have blown the stump of his cigar into the valley below! Others had met him in the night on lonely paths amid the chapparal, and according to them his face and hands had appeared red and luminous as coals of fire! He had been seen on the high plains by the hateros—on the cliff of "La Niña,"—in many parts of the valley; but no one had ventured near enough to exchange words with him. Every one had fled or shunned him. It was even asserted that he had been seen crossing the little

bridge that led out of Don Ambrosio's garden, and thus brought down a fresh shower of scandal on the devoted head of Catalina. The scandal-mongers, however, were sadly disappointed on hearing that this bridge no longer existed, but had been removed by Don Ambrosio on the day following the discovery of his daughter's misconduct!

In no part of the world is superstition stronger than among the ignorant populace of the settlements of New Mexico. In fact it may be regarded as forming part of their religion. The missionary padrés, in grafting the religion of Rome upon the sun-worship of Quetzalcoatl, admitted for their own purposes a goodly string of superstitions. It would be strange if their people did not believe in others, however absurd. Witchcraft, therefore, and all like things, were among the

New Mexicans as much matters of belief as the Deity himself.

It is not then to be wondered at that Carlos the cibolero became associated with the devil. His feats of horsemanship and hair-breadth 'scapes from his enemies were, to say the least, something wonderful and romantic, even when viewed in a natural sense. But the populace of San Ildefonso no longer regarded them in this light. With them his skill in the "coleo de toros," in "running the cock,"—his feat of horsemanship on the cliff—his singular escapes from carbine and lance, were no longer due to himself, but to the devil. The "diablo" was at the bottom of all!

If the outlaw appeared so often during the next few days to those who did not wish to see him, it was somewhat strange that those who were desirous of a sight and an interview could get neither one nor the other. The

lieutenants, Yañez and Ortiga, with their following of troopers, were on the scout and lookout from morning till night, and from one day's end to the other. The spies that were thickly set in all parts where there was a probability he might appear, could see nothing of Carlos! To-day he was reported here, tomorrow there; but on tracing these reports to their sources, it usually turned out that some ranchero with a black horse had been taken for him; and thus the troopers were led from place to place, and misled by false reports until both horses and men were nearly worn out in the hopeless pursuit. This, however, had become the sole duty on which the soldiers were employed—as the Commandante had no idea of giving up the chase, so long as there was a trooper left to take the trail.

One place was closely watched both by day and by night. It was watched by soldiers

disguised, and also by spies employed for the purpose. This was the rancho of the cibolero himself. The disguised soldiers and spies were placed around it, in such positions that they could see every movement that took place outside the walls without being themselves seen. These positions they held during the day, taking others at night; and the surveillance was thus continual, by these secret sentries relieving one another. Should the cibolero appear, it was not the duty of the spies to attack him. They were only to communicate with a troop—kept in readiness not far off—that thus insured a sufficient force for the object.

The mother and sister of the cibolero had returned to live in the rancho. The peons had re-roofed and repaired it—an easy task, as the walls had not been injured by the

fire. It was now as comfortable a dwelling as ever.

The mother and sister were not molested —in fact, they were supposed to know nothing of the fact that eyes were continually upon them. But there was a design in this toleration. They were to be narrowly watched in their movements. They were never to leave the rancho without being closely followed, and the circumstance of their going out reported to the leader of the ambushed troop at the moment of its occurrence. These orders were of the strictest kind, and their disobedience threatened with severe punishment.

The reasons for all this were quite simple. Both Vizcarra and Roblado believed or suspected, that Carlos might leave the settlement altogether—why should he not—and

take both mother and sister along with him. Indeed, why should he not? The place could be no more a home to him, and he would easily find another beyond the Great Plains. No time could ever release him from the ban that hung over him. He could never pay the forfeit of his life—but by that life. It was, therefore, perfectly natural in the two officers to suspect him of the intention of moving elsewhere.

But, reasoned they, so long as we hold the mother and sister as hostages, he will not leave them. He will still continue to lurk around the settlement, and if not now, some time shall the fox be caught and destroyed.

So reasoned the Commandante and his captain, and hence the strictness of their orders about guarding the rancho. Its inmates were really prisoners, though—as Viz-

carra and Roblado supposed—they were ignorant of the fact.

Notwithstanding all their ingenious plans—notwithstanding all their spies, and scouts, and soldiers—notwithstanding their promises of reward and threats of punishment—day followed day, and still the outlaw remained at large.

## CHAPTER XXII.

For a long time Carlos had neither been seen nor heard of except through reports, that on being examined turned out to be false. Both the Commandante and his *confrère* began to grow uneasy. They began to fear he had in reality left the settlement and gone elsewhere to live, and this they dreaded above all things. Both had a reason for wishing him thus out of the place, and until late occurrences nothing would have pleased them better. But their feelings had undergone a change, and neither the intended seducer nor the fortune-hunter desired that things should end just in that way.

The passion of revenge had almost destroyed the ruffian love of the one, and the avarice of the other. The very sympathy which both received on account of their misfortunes whetted this passion to a continued keenness. There was no danger of its dying within the breast of either. The looking-glass alone would keep it alive in Vizcarra's bosom for the rest of his life.

They were together on the azotea of the Presidio, talking the matter between them, and casting over the probabilities of their late suspicion.

"He is fond of the sister," remarked the Commandante; "and mother too, for that matter, hag as she is! Still, my dear Roblado, a man likes his own life better than anything else. Near is the shirt, &c. He knows well that to stay here is to get into our hands some time or other, and he knows

what we 'll do with him if he should. Though he has made some clever escapes, I 'll admit, that may not always be his fortune. The pitcher may go to the well once too often. He 's a cunning rascal—no doubt knows this riddle—and therefore I begin to fear he has taken himself off,—at least for a long while. He may return again, but how the deuce are we to sustain this constant espionage? It would weary down the devil! It will become as tiresome as the siege of Granada was to the good king Fernando and his warlike spouse of the soiled chemise. *Por Dios!* I 'm sick of it already!"

"Rather than let him escape us," replied Roblado, "I 'd wear out my life at it."

"So I—so I, Capitan. Don't fear I have the slightest intention of dropping our system of vigilance. No—no—look in this face. *Carajo!*"

And, as the speaker reflected upon his

spoiled features, the bitterest scowl passed over them, making them still more hideous.

"And yet," continued Vizcarra, following out the original theme, "it does not seem natural that he should leave *them* behind him —even for a short period, after what has occurred, and after the risk he ran to recover *her;* does it?"

"No," replied the other, thoughtfully, "no. What I most wonder at is his not setting off with them the night she got back,—that very night,—for by the letter he was there upon the spot! But, true, it takes some time to prepare for a journey across the prairies. He would never have gone to one of our own settlements—not likely—and to have travelled elsewhere would have required some preparation for the women at least; for himself, I believe he is as much at home in the desert as either the antelope

or the prairie wolf. Still with an effort he might have gone away at that time and taken them along with him. It was bad management on our part not to send our men down that night."

"I had no fear of his going off, else I should have done so."

"How?—no fear? was it not highly probable?"

"Not in the least," replied Roblado.

"I cannot understand you, my dear Capitan. Why not?"

"Because there is a magnet in this valley that held him tighter than either mother or sister could, and I knew that."

"Oh! now I understand you."

"Yes," continued Roblado, grinding his teeth against each other, and speaking in a bitter tone; "that precious 'margarita,' that is yet to be my wife,—ha! ha! He

was not likely to be off without having a talk with her. They have had it. God knows whether they agreed to make it their last, but I, with the help of Don Ambrosio, have arranged that for them. *Carrai!* she'll make no more midnight sorties, I fancy. No—he's not gone. I cannot think it,—for two reasons. First, on her account. Have you ever loved, Commandante? I mean truly loved! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Ha! ha! ha! well I think I was caught once."

"Then you will know that when a man really loves—for I myself count that foolish act among my experiences—when a man really loves, there's no rope strong enough to pull him away from the spot where the object of his love resides. No, I believe this fellow, low as he is, not only loves but worships this future wife of mine,—ha! ha!

— and I believe also that no danger, not even the prospect of the garotta, will frighten him from the settlement so long as he has the hope of another clandestine *téte-à-téte* with her; and, knowing that she is ready to meet him half-way in such a matter, he will not have lost hope yet.

"But my second reason for believing he is still lurking about, is that which you yourself have brought forward. He is not likely to leave them behind after what has happened. We have not blinded him; though, —*Gracios a Dios*, or the devil,—we have dusted the eyes of everybody besides! He knows all, as the girl Vicenza can well testify. Now, I have no belief that, knowing all this, he would leave them for any lengthened period. What I do believe is that the fellow is as cunning as a *coyoté*, sees our trap, knows the bait, and won't be caught if he can help

it. He is not far off, and, through these accursed peons of his, communicates with the women regularly and continually."

"What can be done?"

"I have been thinking."

"If we stop the peons from going back and forth they would be sure to know the trap that was set around them."

"Exactly so, Commandante. That would never do."

"Have you considered any other plan?"

"Partly I have."

"Let us hear it!"

"It is this. Some of these peons regularly visit the fellow in his lair. I feel certain of it. Of course they have been followed, but only in daylight, and then they are found to be on their ordinary business. But there is one of them who goes abroad at night; and all attempts at following him

have proved abortive. He loses himself in the chapparal paths, in spite of the spies. That is why I am certain he visits the cibolero."

"It seems highly probable."

"Now if we can find one who could either follow this fellow or track him; but there's the difficulty. We are badly off for a good tracker. There is not one in the whole troop."

"There are other ciboleros and hunters in the valley. Why not procure one of them?"

"True, we might—there are none of them over well disposed to the outlaw—so it is said. But I fear there is none of them fit, that is, none who combines both the skill and the courage necessary for this purpose, —for both are necessary. They hate the fellow enough, but they fear him as well.

There is *one* whom I have heard of,—in fact know something of him, who would be the very man for us. He not only would not fear an encounter with the cibolero, but would hardly shun one with the devil; and, as for his skill, in all sorts of Indian craft, his reputation among his kind is even greater than that of Carlos himself."

"Who is he?"

"I should say there are two of them, for the two always go together; one is a mulatto, who has formerly been a slave among the Americanos. He is now a runaway, and therefore hates everything that reminds him of his former masters. Among other souvenirs, as I am told, he hates our cibolero with a good stout hatred. This springs partly from the feeling already mentioned, and partly from the rivalry of hunter-fame. So much in our favour. The *alter ego*

of the mulatto is a man of somewhat kindred race, a *zambo* from the coast near Matamoras or Tampico. How he strayed this way no one knows, but it is a good while ago, and the mulatto and he have for long been shadows of each other; live together, hunt together, and fight for one another. Both are powerful men, and cunning as strong; but the mulatto is the zambo's master in everything, villany not excepted. Neither is troubled with scruples. They would be the very men for our purpose."

"And why not get them at once?"

"Therein lies the difficulty—unfortunately they are not here at present. They are off upon a hunt. They are hangers-on of the mission, occasionally employed by the Padrés in procuring venison and other game.

"Now, it seems that the stomachs of our

good abstemious fathers have lately taken a fancy to buffalo-tongue cured in a certain way, which can only be done when the animal is fresh killed. In order to procure this delicacy they have sent these hunters to the buffalo range."

"How long have they been gone?—can you tell?"

"Several weeks—long before the return of *our* cibolero."

"It is possible they may be on the way back. Is it not?"

"I think it quite probable, but I shall ride over to the mission this very hour and inquire."

"Do so; it would be well if we could secure them. A brace of fellows, such as you describe these to be, would be worth our whole command. Lose no time!"

"I shall not waste a minute," Roblado replied, and leaning over the wall he called out, "Hola! José! my horse there!"

Shortly after a messenger came up to say that his horse was saddled and ready. He was about to descend the escalera, when a large closely-cropped head—with a circular patch about the size of a blister shaven out of the crown—made its appearance over the stone-work at the top of the escalera. It was the head of the Padré Joaquin; and the next moment the owner, bland and smiling, appeared upon the azotea.

END OF VOL. II.

LONDON:
Printed by G. BARCLAY, Castle St. Leicester Sq.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES
THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below

1 1946
UL NOV 15 RECD
REC'D LD-URL
LD-URL JAN 27 1968
AUG 7 1968
REC'D UD-URL
UD-URL FEB 12 1970
JUN 15 1970
UL JUN 18 1973
REC'D LD-URL
UL SEP 29 1975
JAN 14 1976
REC'D LD-URL
AC MAY 05 1997
JAN 02 1997

Form L-9–15m-2,'36

UNIVERSITY of CALIFORNIA
AT
LOS ANGELES

University Of California, Los Angeles
L 007 489 579 8